NARUTO
SHONEN JUMP MANGA
Story & Art by
Masashi Kishimoto
volume 1

岸本斉史

This volume of Naruto is apparently the first to be created entirely digitally. My guess is that, in the future, manga production will continue to move further and further into this kind of production and away from the more traditional methods.
Both the backgrounds and the characters themselves are created in software as polygons, and once the initial design and programming is done, any imaginable composition is possible. For action sequences, we use motion capture to create and manipulate the coolest poses we can come up with. It's all done on the computer, without using any paper or ink. Our methods will probably continue to change as the technology evolves... but there's one thing that won't ever change: the need to invent good stories!

—*Masashi Kishimoto, 2001*

Author/artist Masashi Kishimoto was born in 1974 in rural Okayama Prefecture, Japan. After spending time in art college, he won the Hop Step Award for new manga artists with his manga **Karakuri** ("Mechanism"). Kishimoto decided to base his next story on traditional Japanese culture. His first version of **Naruto**, drawn in 1997, was a one-shot story about fox spirits; his final version, which debuted in **Weekly Shonen Jump** in 1999, quickly became the most popular ninja manga in Japan.

NARUTO VOL. 7
The SHONEN JUMP Graphic Novel Edition

This graphic novel contains material that was originally published in English in **SHONEN JUMP** #27-31.

STORY AND ART BY MASASHI KISHIMOTO

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PARENTAL ADVISORY
NARUTO is rated T for Teen and is recommended for ages 13 and up. This volume contains realistic & fantasy violence.

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SHONEN JUMP GRAPHIC NOVEL

NARUTO™

VOL. 7

OROCHIMARU'S CURSE

STORY AND ART BY

MASASHI KISHIMOTO

SAKURA サクラ

Smart and studious, Sakura is the brightest of Naruto's classmates, but she's constantly distracted by her crush on Sasuke. Her goal: to win Sasuke's heart!

NARUTO ナルト

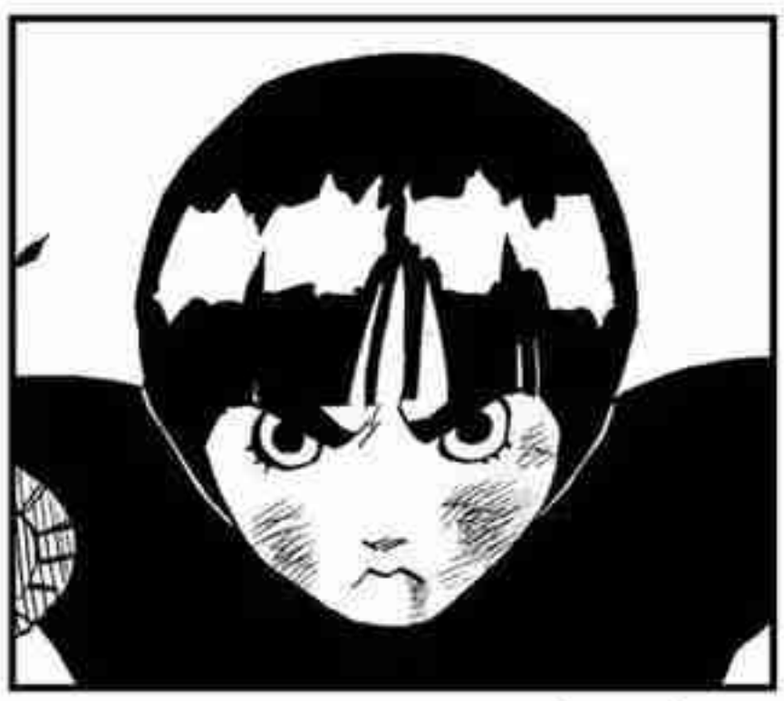
When Naruto was born, a destructive fox spirit was imprisoned inside his body. Spurned by the older villagers, he's grown into an attention-seeking troublemaker. His goal: to become the village's next *Hokage*.

SASUKE サスケ

The top student in Naruto's class, Sasuke comes from the prestigious Uchiha clan. His goal: to get revenge on a mysterious person who wronged him in the past.

MITARASHI ANKO
みたらしアンコ

The Second Chief Examination Officer, proctor of the test in the Forest of Death! She tried hunting down Orochimaru herself, but since he slipped through her fingers, she has been waiting for the help of the elite Black Ops team she summoned.



ROCK LEE ロック・リー

Rock Lee is one of the most talented young shinobi around, and he's completely infatuated with Sakura. Separated from his teammates Neji and Tenten in the forest, he tried to act as Sakura's protector but was severely knocked around by the Sound Ninja.

THE SOUND NINJA (OTONIN)音忍

These mysterious ninja are in the forest only to do their master Orochimaru's bidding — to destroy Sasuke!

THE ASUMA CELL
Choji チョウジ
Ino いの
Shikamaru シカマル

Choji, Ino and Shikamaru chased after Naruto's team hoping to steal their scroll. Watching from the sidelines as Lee and Sakura fight the Sound Ninja, they've been debating whether to get involved or stay in the shadows…but now Ino is jumping into the fray, coming to her rival Sakura's aid!

THE STORY SO FAR...

Twelve years ago, a destructive nine-tailed fox spirit attacked the ninja village of Konohagakure. The *Hokage*, or village champion, defeated the fox by sealing its soul into the body of a baby boy. Now that boy, Uzumaki Naruto, has grown up to become a ninja-in-training, learning the art of *ninjutsu* with his classmates Sakura and Sasuke.

Naruto, Sasuke and Sakura are deep in the Forest of Death, the site of the second stage of the Chûnin (Journeyman Ninja) Selection Exam…but more urgent concerns have distracted them from collecting the scrolls they need to pass the test. After coming under the attack of the nefarious impostor Orochimaru, Naruto and Sasuke now lie unconscious on the forest floor. Mitarashi Anko, the exam proctor, chases after Orochimaru and learns his intentions: to mold Sasuke into his successor…assuming Sasuke survives the curse that Orochimaru placed on him. Orochimaru's minions, the mysterious Sound Ninja, are also hunting down Sasuke, and they're confused to discover that their leader has already caught his prey. But they're not prepared to back down, so the burden is on Sakura to defend her helpless teammates…

NARUTO

VOL. 7
OROCHIMARU'S CURSE

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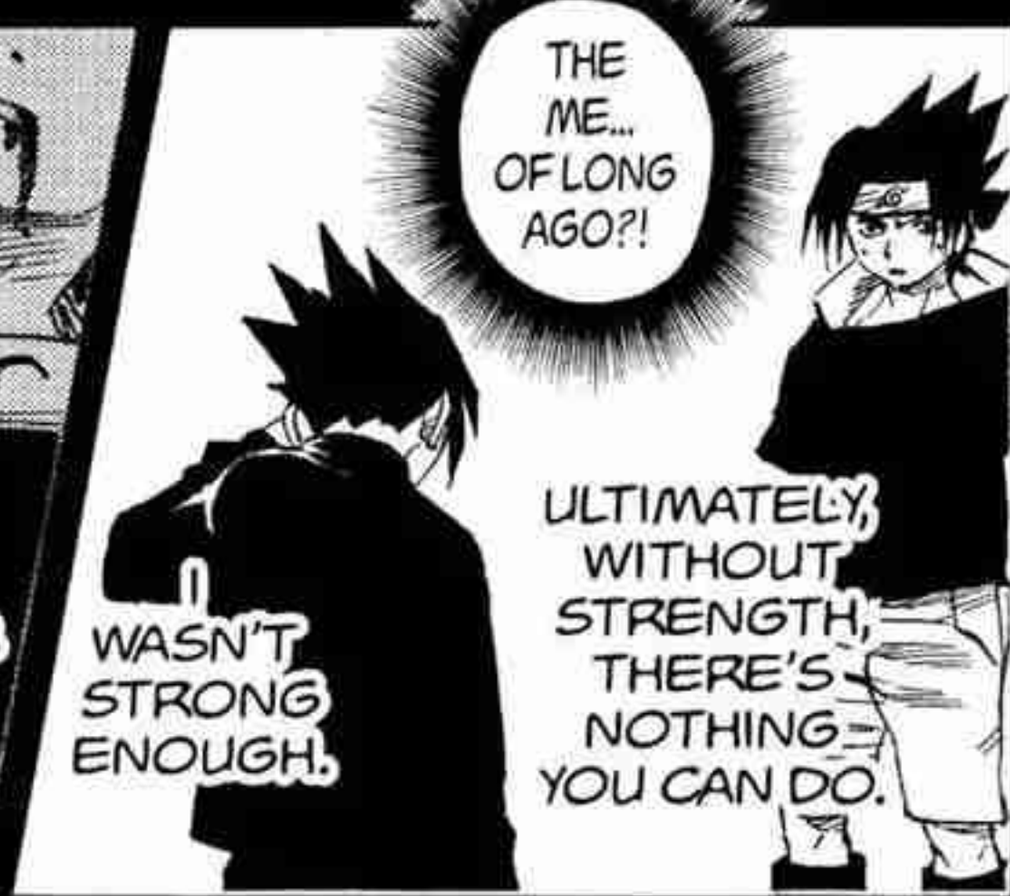
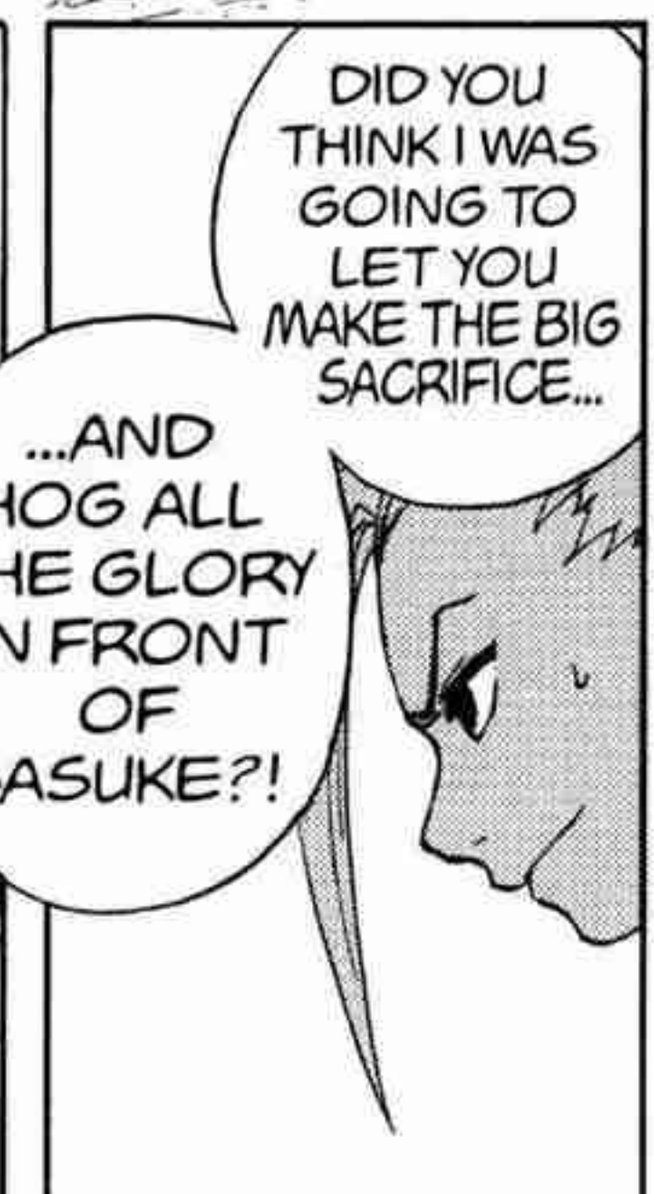
Number 55: No Holds Barred!!



UNH...

Number 55: No Holds Barred!!



NOPE! NO WAY. SORRY, BUDDY, BUT THAT'S THE WAY IT IS!

WE'RE THE MEN HERE! WE CAN'T RUN AWAY WHEN INO'S READY TO RISK HER LIFE FIGHTING! NOT EVEN IF WE DIE!!

DOINK DOINK

SHIKAMARU... LET GO OF ME!

WH-WHAT ARE YOU GUYS THINKING?!

THOSE CREEPS ARE TOO DANGEROUS! THEY'LL EAT US ALIVE!!

...FATTY.

HEH HEH... WE'LL LET YOU OFF THE HOOK IF YOU WANT TO RUN...

SORRY I DRAGGED YOU BOYS INTO THIS!!

WHAT'S MEANT TO HAPPEN WILL, I GUESS!

BUT WE ARE A THREE-MAN CELL... ALL FOR ONE AND ONE FOR ALL.

I... COULD'VE SWORN HE CALLED ME...

WHAT DID THAT GUY JUST SAY?

FLINCH

...FATSO!!

YOU'RE WELCOME TO RUN AWAY... IF YOU CAN FIND A HIDING PLACE THAT'S BIG ENOUGH...

THAT WORD'S A BIG NO-NO WITH CHOJI...

IF THIS GUY SAYS IT AGAIN...!

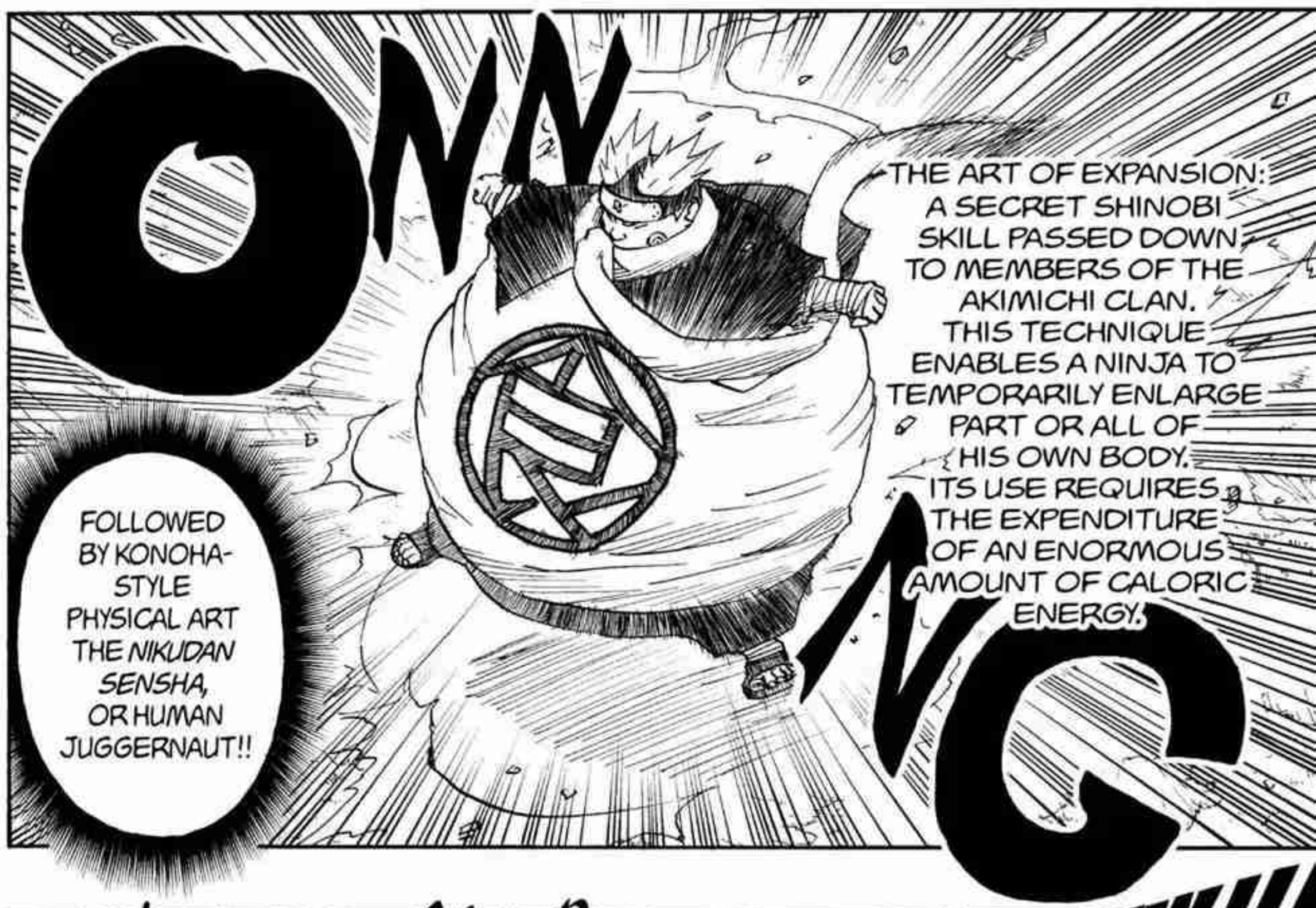
EH?!

I'M NOT FAT!!
I'M JUST PLEASINGLY PLUMP!!
WAP
KONOHA AND THE SOUND NINJA ARE AT WAR!!
STAB
DOES EVERYONE UNDER-STAND?! DO YOU GET ME?!
RR ROARR
PLEASINGLY PLUMP PEOPLE UNITE!!!
FWAP
WOBL
UNREAL!
THIS IS TURNING INTO A COMPLETE MESS!
GOOD LUCK!! ♡ CHOJI'S LOST IT!
SHHF

CHOJI'S SHIRT SAYS "SHOKU" MEANING "FOOD" OR "EAT."

BAIKA-NO-JUTSU! ART OF EXPANSION!!
OKAY!!
FWUP

IT'S ON YOU, CHOJI!
INO-SHIKA-CHO BOAR-DEER-BUTTERFLY FORMATION!!
TAK


FOLLOWED BY KONOHA-STYLE PHYSICAL ART THE NIKUDAN SENSHA, OR HUMAN JUGGERNAUT!!
OWW
THE ART OF EXPANSION: A SECRET SHINOBI SKILL PASSED DOWN TO MEMBERS OF THE AKIMICHI CLAN. THIS TECHNIQUE ENABLES A NINJA TO TEMPORARILY ENLARGE PART OR ALL OF HIS OWN BODY. ITS USE REQUIRES THE EXPENDITURE OF AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF CALORIC ENERGY.
GRRR

BOUNCE

SWUP
SWUP

SSSWUUP

SSSWU

WHAT KIND OF FREAKIN' ART IS THAT?!

RRRUMBLE

!

RRR

ZANKUHA! SLICING THE AIR!!

RRRRRM

JUST A FAT GUY ROLLING HIMSELF AROUND!

HMPH!

FWP

FLYING?! HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE?!

O!!

WG

GOO!

MAYBE ULTRASONIC WAVES...?!
IF THAT THING HITS ME, I'LL BE PULVERIZED!

WITH THAT KIND OF ROTATION... SO MUCH FOR AIR PRESSURE!

DARN!!

SINCE YOU'VE BEEN THE BIGGEST PAIN IN EVERYBODY'S ASCOT...!
OH, NO YOU DON'T!
FWAP

WHOM

SSSSSW
ART OF ME-AND-MY-SHADOW!!

IT'S HIS SHADOW!

TAK

!!

I... CAN'T MOVE! WHY IS THAT?!

GRRRR

AUGH!!

SSSSSSLIP

TAK

BAM

FWUP

?!

WH-WHAT ARE YOU DOING AT A TIME LIKE THIS?! DOSU!

?!

WHAT THE...?!

KAGEMANE-NO-JUTSU: THE ART OF ME-AND-MY-SHADOW

SHIKAMARU'S HALLMARK TECHNIQUE, WHERE HE JOINS AND ATTACHES HIS OWN SHADOW TO THAT OF HIS OPPONENT, FORCING HIS ENEMY TO MIMIC EVERY MOVE HE MAKES! HE CAN DO THIS ONLY BRIEFLY AT ANY GIVEN TIME.

INO! THE WOMAN IS THE ONLY ONE LEFT.

BOTH OF YOU, LEAVE YOUR SCROLLS HERE, AND GO FINISH THE EXAM WITHOUT THEM.

IF EITHER OF YOU MAKES A MOVE, YOUR TEAMMATE KIN IS AS GOOD AS DEAD!

SHUDDER

SHUDDER

WHEN I CAN NO LONGER SENSE EITHER OF YOUR CHAKRAS, I'LL RELEASE KIN!

YOU'RE FINISHED!

WHAT DO THEY THINK IS SO FUNNY?

HEH

HEH

?!

FWUP

NO!!!

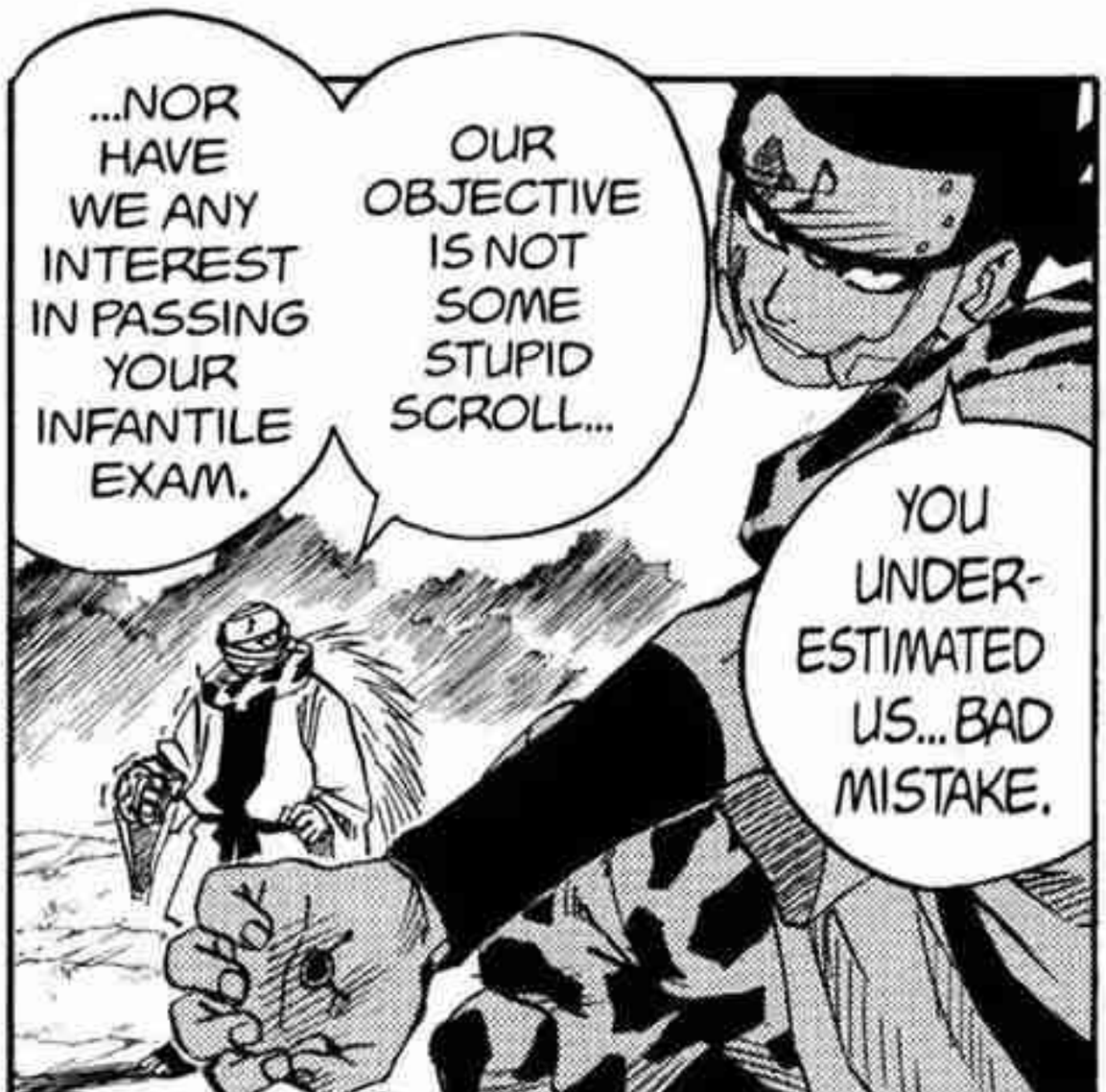
THEY'RE GOING TO--!!

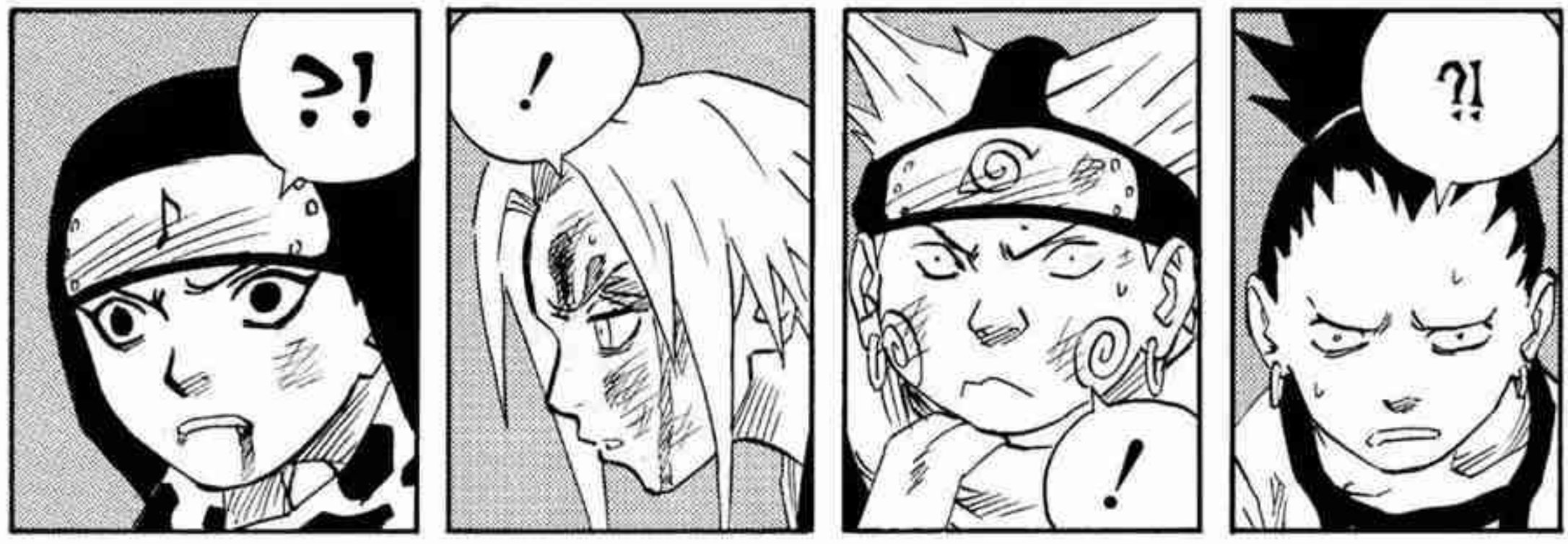
!!

ALEE!!

AGH!

FWOOOM




?!
!
!
?!

WE'RE AFTER SASUKE!

YOU'RE DESPICABLE!

AND AS FOR THE ART THAT GIRL IS USING... FROM THE LOOK OF THINGS, IF WE INFLICT ANY HARM ON HER HOST, HER REAL BODY SUFFERS AS WELL!
HEH HEH... WE CAN KILL HER BY KILLING KIN OURSELVES!
!

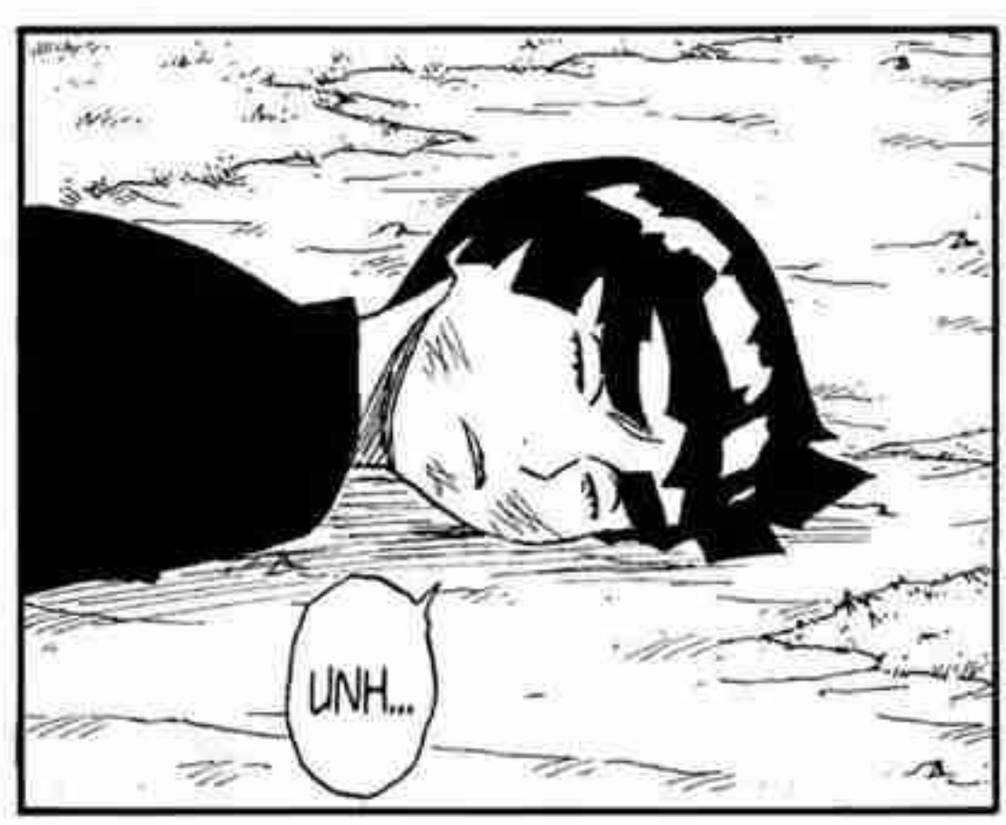
BLAST...
I'M ALMOST AT MY TIME LIMIT!
SO... YOUR LITTLE TRICK CAN ONLY WORK FOR FIVE MINUTES AT A TIME?
!
SIGH

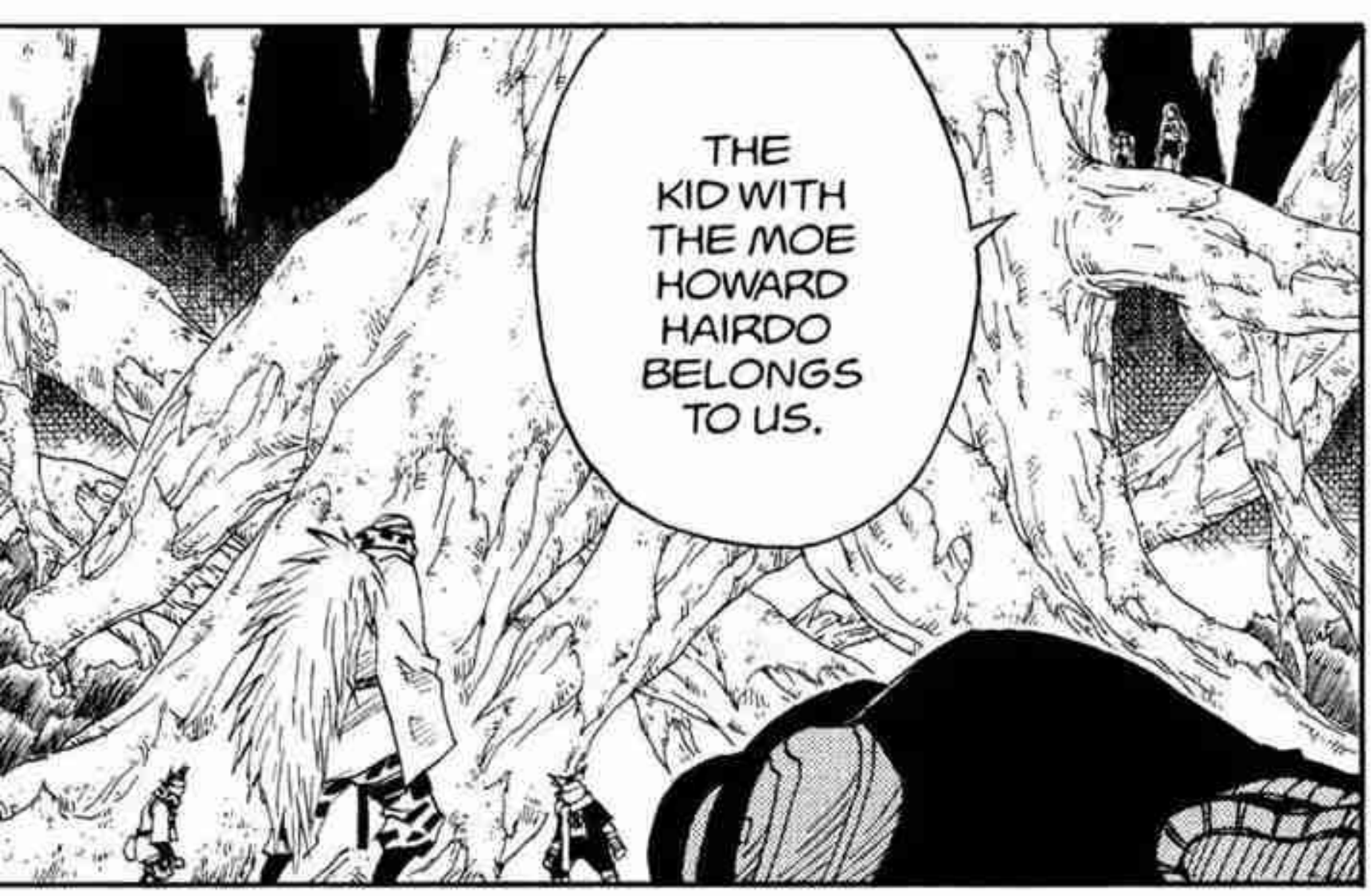
CRAW

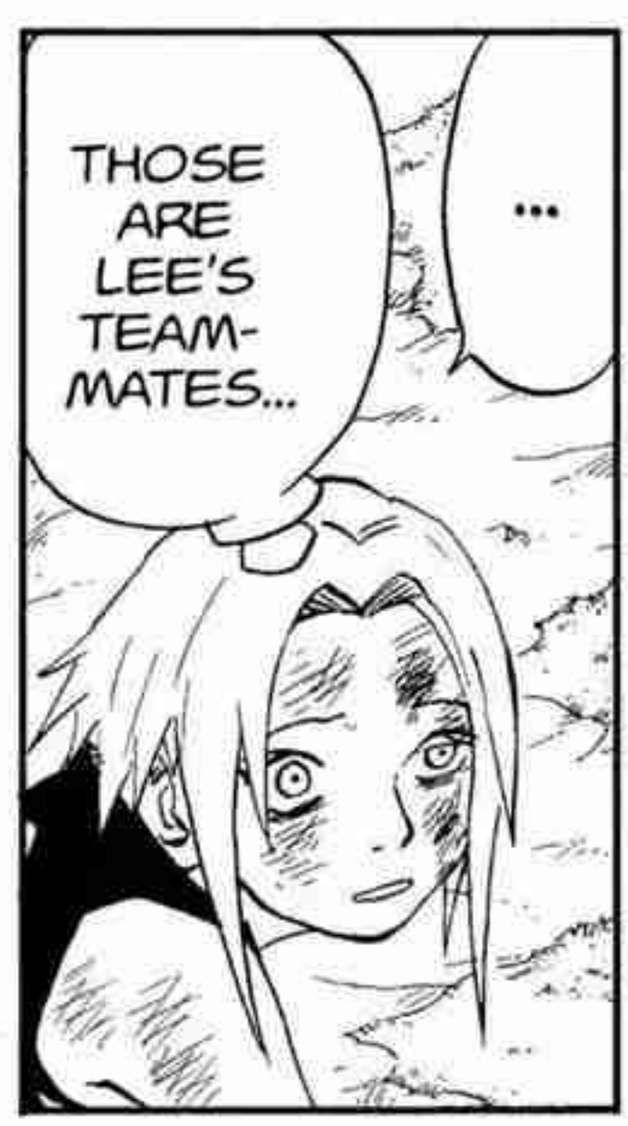
YOU BUCOLIC NONENTITIES THINK YOU'RE ALL THAT JUST BECAUSE YOUR SONIC POWERS...

...WERE STRONG ENOUGH TO WHUMP THESE NOVICES!

AGAIN, THE VERMIN COME CRAWLING FROM THE WOODWORK!







GRRRRR

YOU HURT HIM, SO NOW YOU HAVE TO ANSWER TO US!

!!

HIS EYES SEEM TO PENETRATE EVERYTHING!

GASP

!!

THE CHAKRA I'M SENSING...

HUH?!

...OR WE'LL GIVE YOU EVERY-THING WE'VE GOT!

STOP WHILE YOU STILL CAN...

WELL...

...!!

...WHY DON'T YOU STOP POSTURING AND START DOING SOMETHING ABOUT IT?!

HEH HEH... IF YOU FIND US SO DESPICABLE...

?
...FROM THE LOOK OF IT...
...WE WON'T HAVE TO.

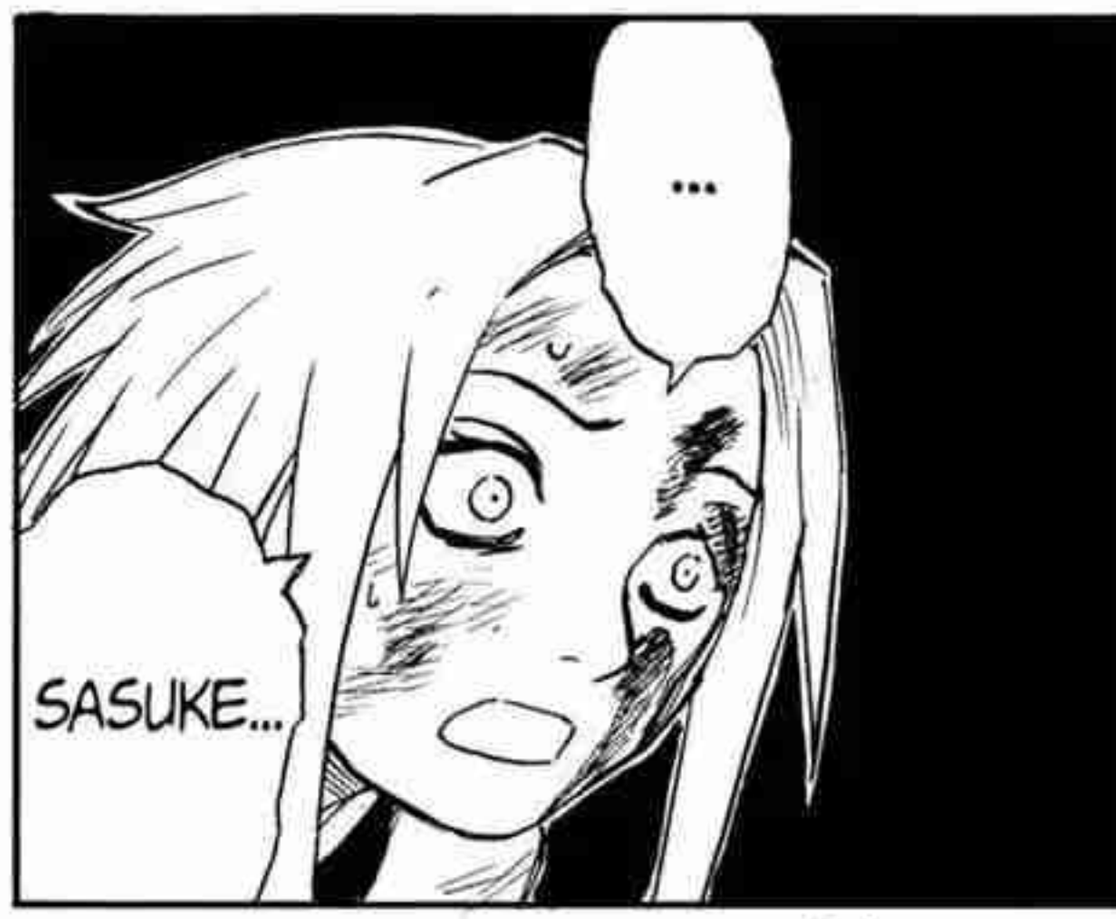
SASUKE! YOU'RE AWAKE!!
!!
WOBBL

...
IS THAT... SASUKE?

!
...
...

!
HUH?

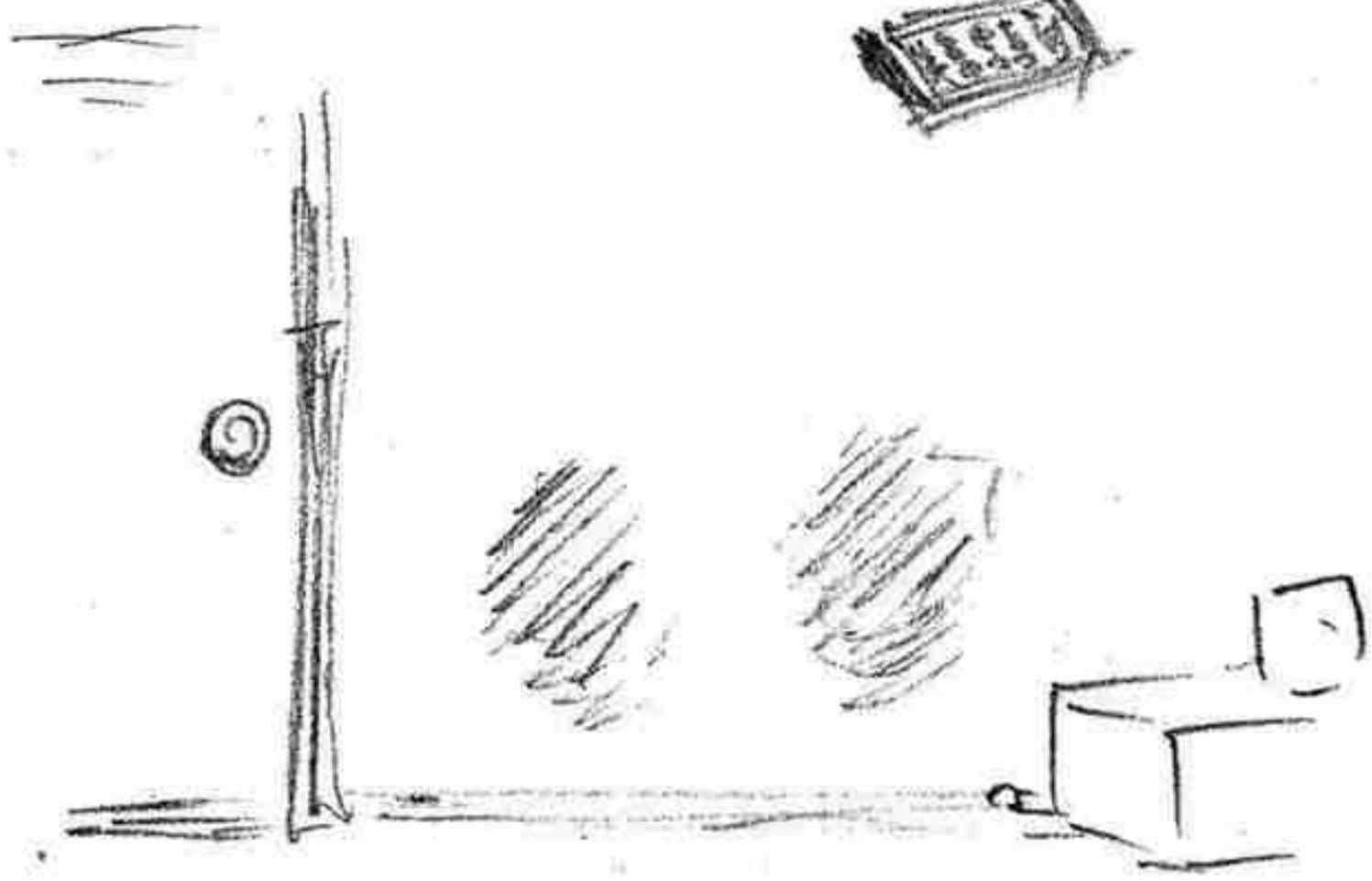
SAKURA...



SSSSIZ
...POINT OUT THE ONES WHO PUMMELED YOU INTO THAT STATE!
...
THE ENERGIES OF THE CURSE... THEY'RE WORKING THEIR WAY AROUND HIS ENTIRE BODY!!
IT WAS US!

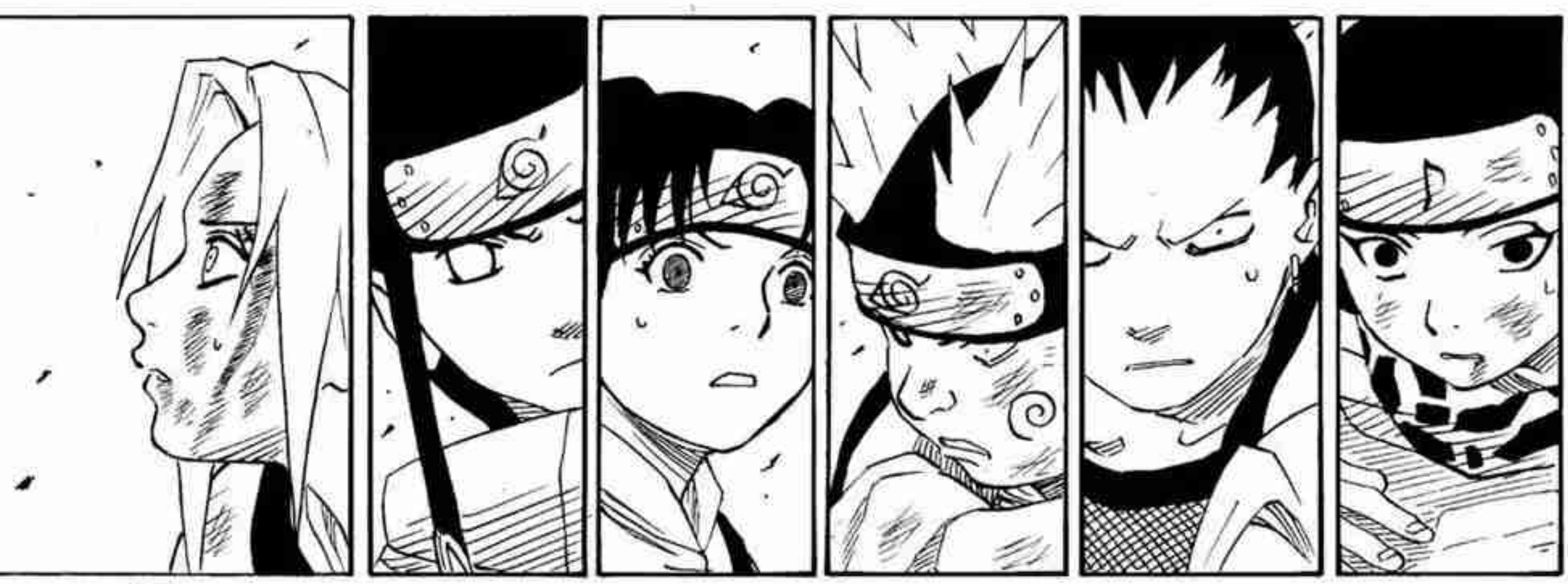
THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI
MY PERSONAL HISTORY, PART ONE: GROWING UP

I WAS THE FIRST-BORN OF TWIN BROTHERS IN A TOWN IN OKAYAMA PREFECTURE IN 1974. I WAS EXTREMELY PREMATURE AND HAD TO BE PUT INTO AN INCUBATOR AT ONCE. WITHOUT IT, I WOULD HAVE DIED. MY SURVIVAL WAS A VICTORY FOR SCIENCE. MY HOMETOWN HAS A TRADITION THAT PERSISTS TO THIS DAY WHERE, ON ONE'S FIRST BIRTHDAY, A MOCHI RICE CAKE IS PLACED UPON YOUR BACK AND THREE OBJECTS ARE PLACED BEFORE YOU. DEPENDING ON WHICH OF THOSE THREE A CHILD GRABS FIRST, THAT CHILD'S FUTURE PATH CAN BE DETERMINED. IN FRONT OF MY TWIN AND I, OUR PARENTS PLACED AN ABACUS (TO REPRESENT SCHOLARSHIP), A BRUSH PEN AND MONEY. THE STORY IS THAT AFTER SOME HESITATION, MY YOUNGER BROTHER TOOK HOLD OF THE BRUSH PEN. AND AT THAT SAME MOMENT, I'M TOLD I UNHESITATINGLY WENT FOR THE CASH, LAUGHING ALL THE WAY. WHAT A BRAT! I MAY HAVE BEEN A MERCENARY BABY, BUT AS I GREW OLDER, MY INTERESTS TURNED TOWARD DRAWING... AS DID THOSE OF MY BROTHER. TO THIS DAY, THERE ARE TWO LARGE BROWN STAINS ON THE WALL OF MY PARENTS' HOME. WHEN I ASKED MY MOTHER ABOUT IT, SHE TOLD ME, "WHEN YOU TWO WERE BABIES, YOU USED THE POOP THAT HAD OOZED OUT OF YOUR DIAPERS TO DECORATE THE WALL. WE'VE TRIED TO WASH IT OFF TIME AND TIME AGAIN, BUT THE STAIN REMAINS." THAT'S WHEN I REALIZED I'D WANTED TO BE AN ARTIST MY ENTIRE LIFE.



Number 56:

The Strength That Is Given...!!



YOUR BODY...?!

SASUKE...

...BURSTING WITH POWER!

I FEEL FINE... STRONG...

NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.

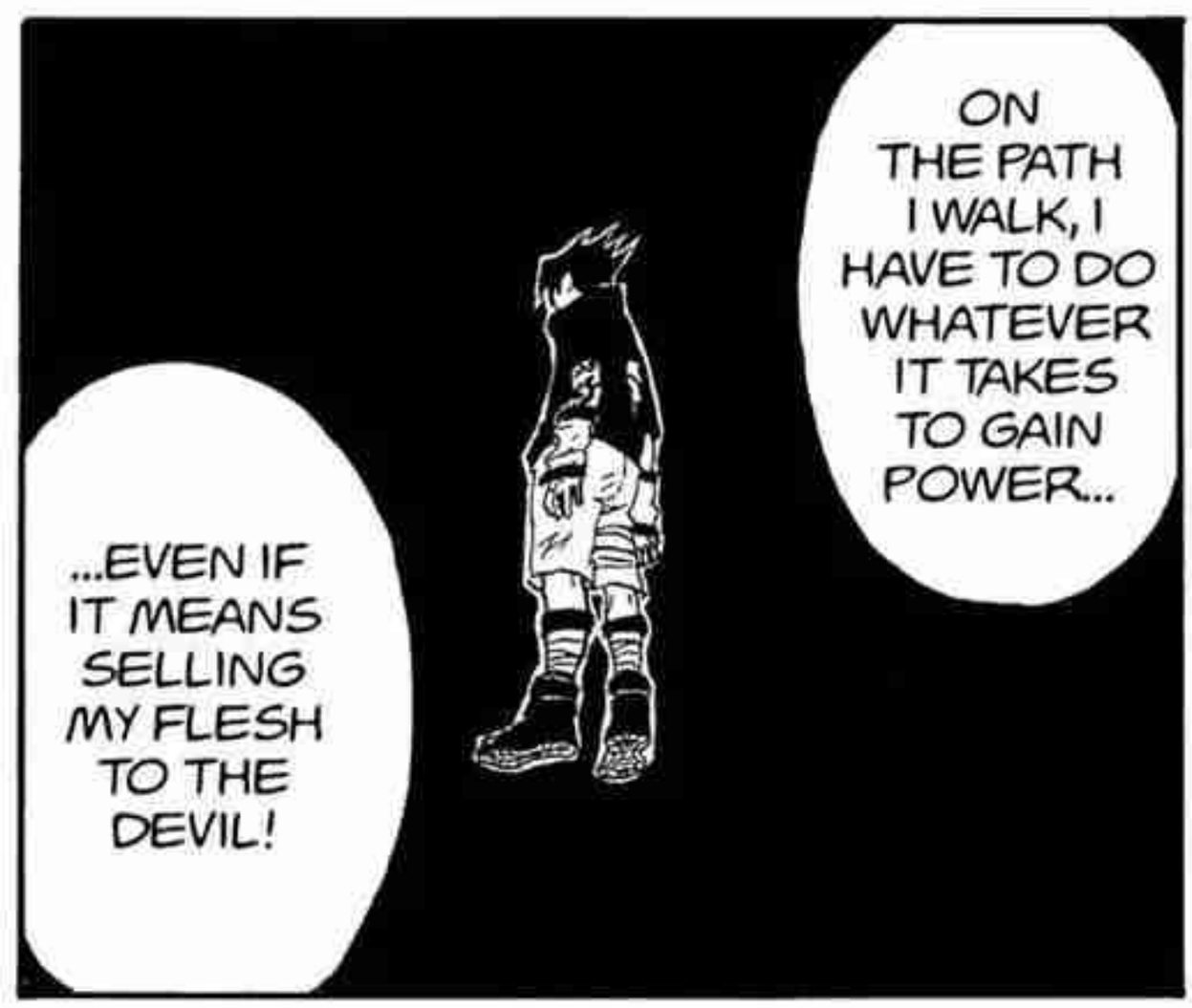
I UNDERSTAND NOW.

I AM AN AVENGER...

HUH?

I GOT IT FROM HIM.

TAK



IT WAS YOU.

SO...

HUNH?
!!

GRR!

KAI! RELEASE!
AW, MAN!!
FWUP

CHOJI, LET'S GET MOVING! IT'S TIME WE GOT OUT OF HERE!!
TAK
INO! IF YOU STAY IN THAT FORM, YOU'LL BE DRAGGED INTO THIS!! GET BACK TO YOUR OWN BODY!

!
UNNH...
UNH!
WELCOME BACK!!
GOOD!

UNNH...

OOOWG

THAT'S...
!

FWUP
SNAP OUT OF IT, DOSU! JUST BECAUSE HE REFUSES TO DIE...
!

TOO LARGE FOR HIS BODY TO CONTAIN, EVEN AFTER WE...!
HIS CHAKRA'S IMMENSE!!

!!

ZAKU, NO!!
DON'T YOU GET IT?!

SUPERSONIC AIR-SLICE!!!

ONG
ONG
SSKKE
EEK!!
AGH!
BLEW THAT PIPSQUEAK TO BITS.
HAH!
HUF
HUF
WHAT PIPSQUEAK IS THAT?
HUF
HUF
HUF

!!

VNNNN

HE'S FAST!
AND STRONG ENOUGH TO LIFT BOTH OF THEM AT ONCE!
SHHHM

KAPOW
ACK!

FIRE STYLE-- ART OF THE DRAGON'S BREATH, PHOENIX TECHNIQUE!
FWOOSH

GASP
FWUP

!!

!!

FWSH

FWOOOM
WHAT?!
!!

YOU'RE GETTING OVER-CONFIDENT!
I CAN JUST BLOW THESE OUT!!!
FWOOOM

THUK THUK
AIEE!

THERE ARE SHURIKEN WITHIN THE FLAMES!

HUNH?!
SMAT

ZAKU! BENEATH YOU!
!!

!!
THAK

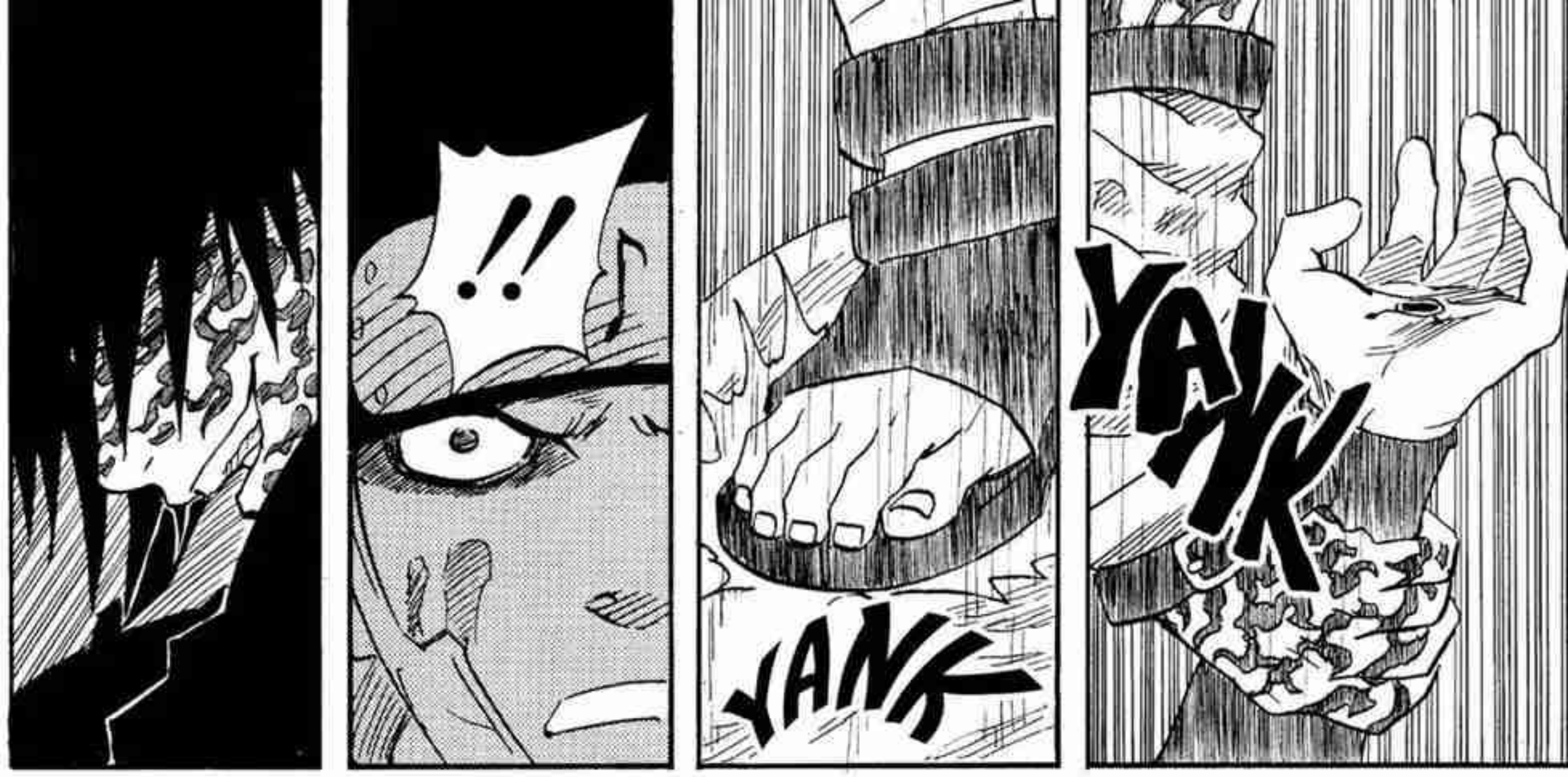
OWWW...!

WHAT ON EARTH HAPPENED TO HIM...!?
IS IT REALLY SASUKE?!
SASUKE'S CHAKRA IS COMPLETELY UNLIKE WHAT IT WAS WHEN WE WERE IN SCHOOL TOGETHER!

...

HEH...YOU TAKE SUCH PRIDE IN YOUR ARMS... TIME TO BID THEM FAREWELL.
!

REST ASSURED, SASUKE WILL COME TO ME...


!!
YANK
YAK

...!!

AAAAARGH!!
SUMP

SNAP
SNAP

!!

!!

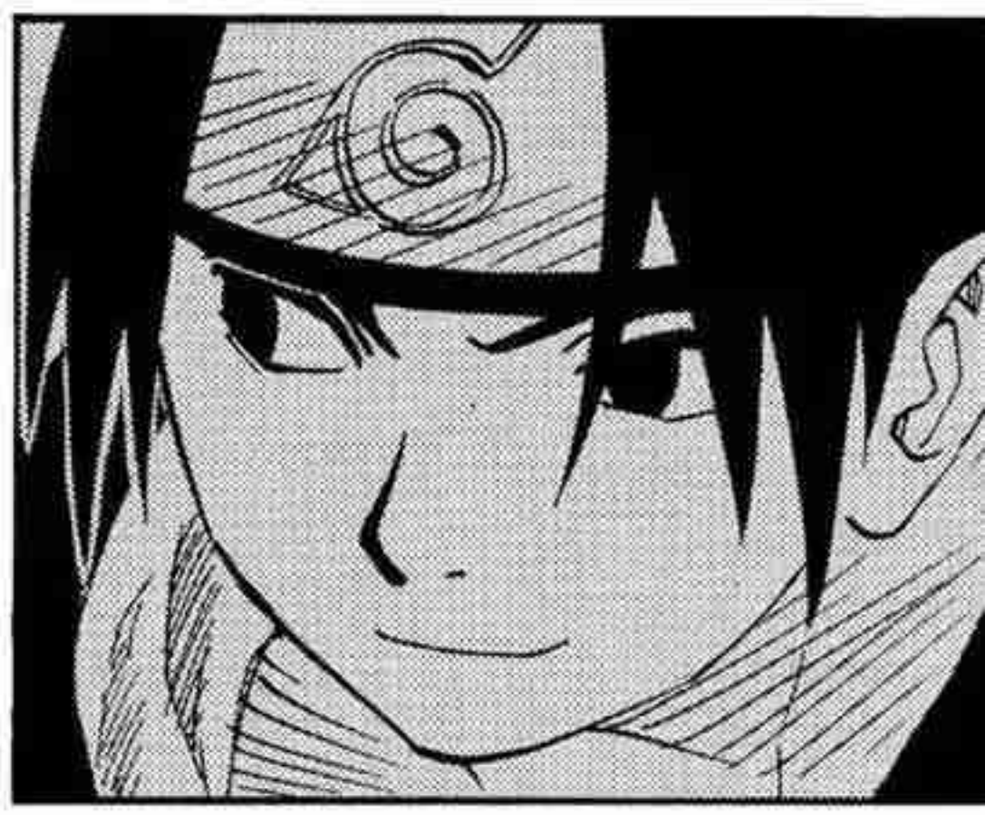
!!

...THAT WAS...

U-UNNH...

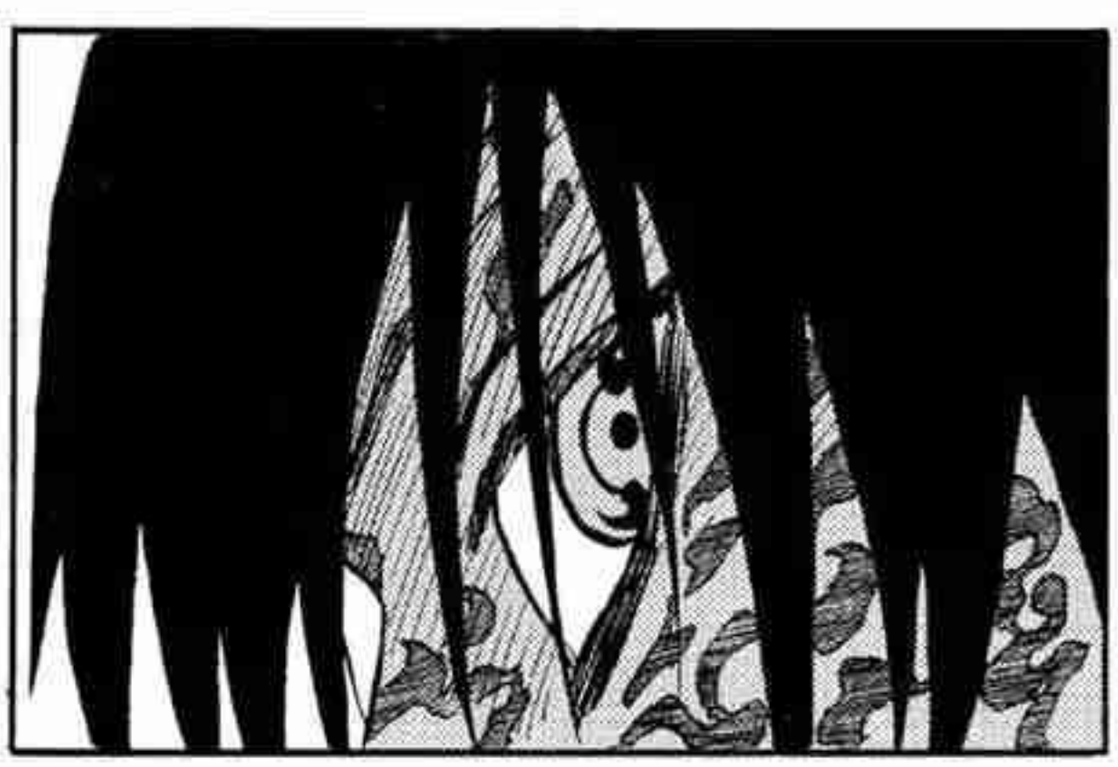
AND THEN THERE WAS ONE.
THAT'S... ....!!
I HOPE YOU'RE MORE OF A CHALLENGE.
TAK

THIS IS NOT SASUKE!

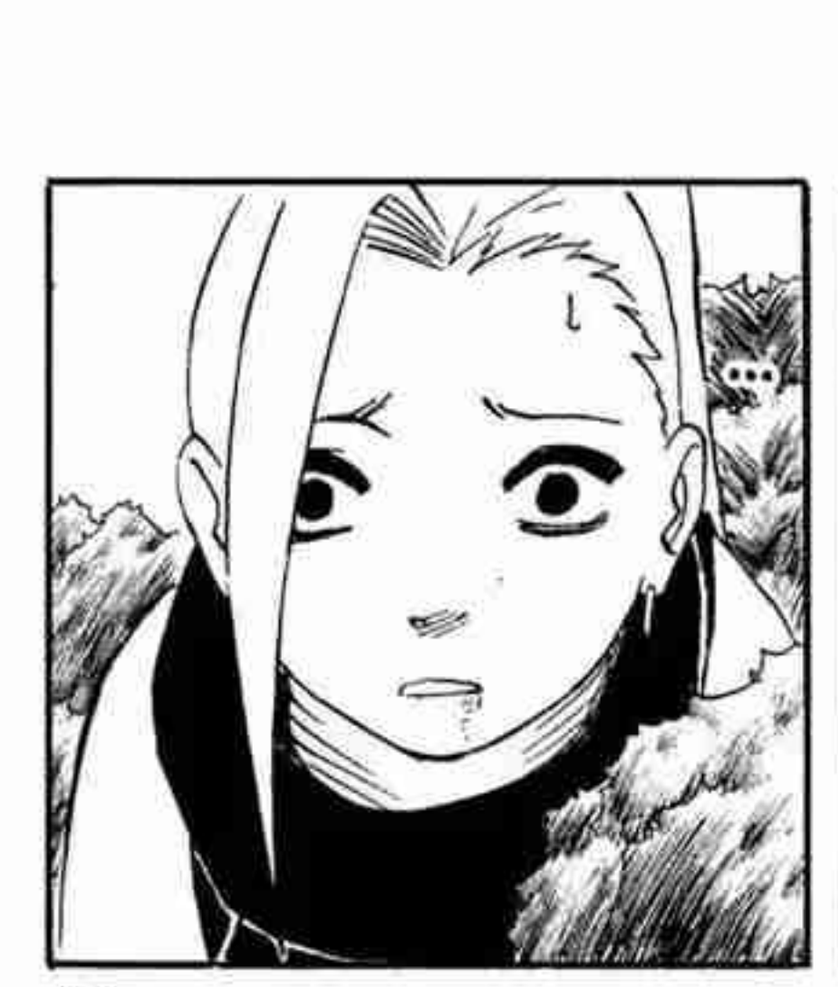


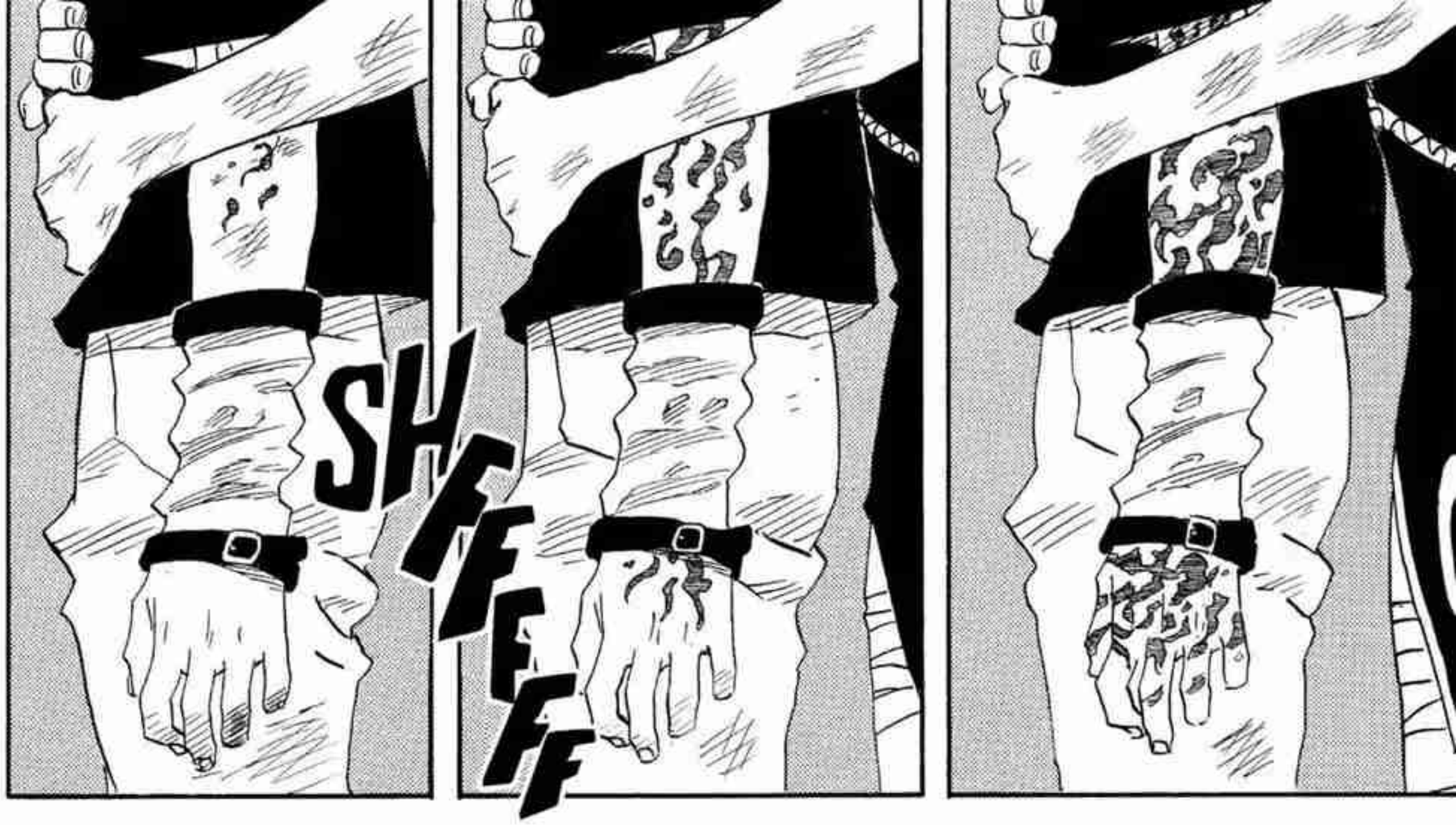
STOP IT!

READ
THIS
WAY



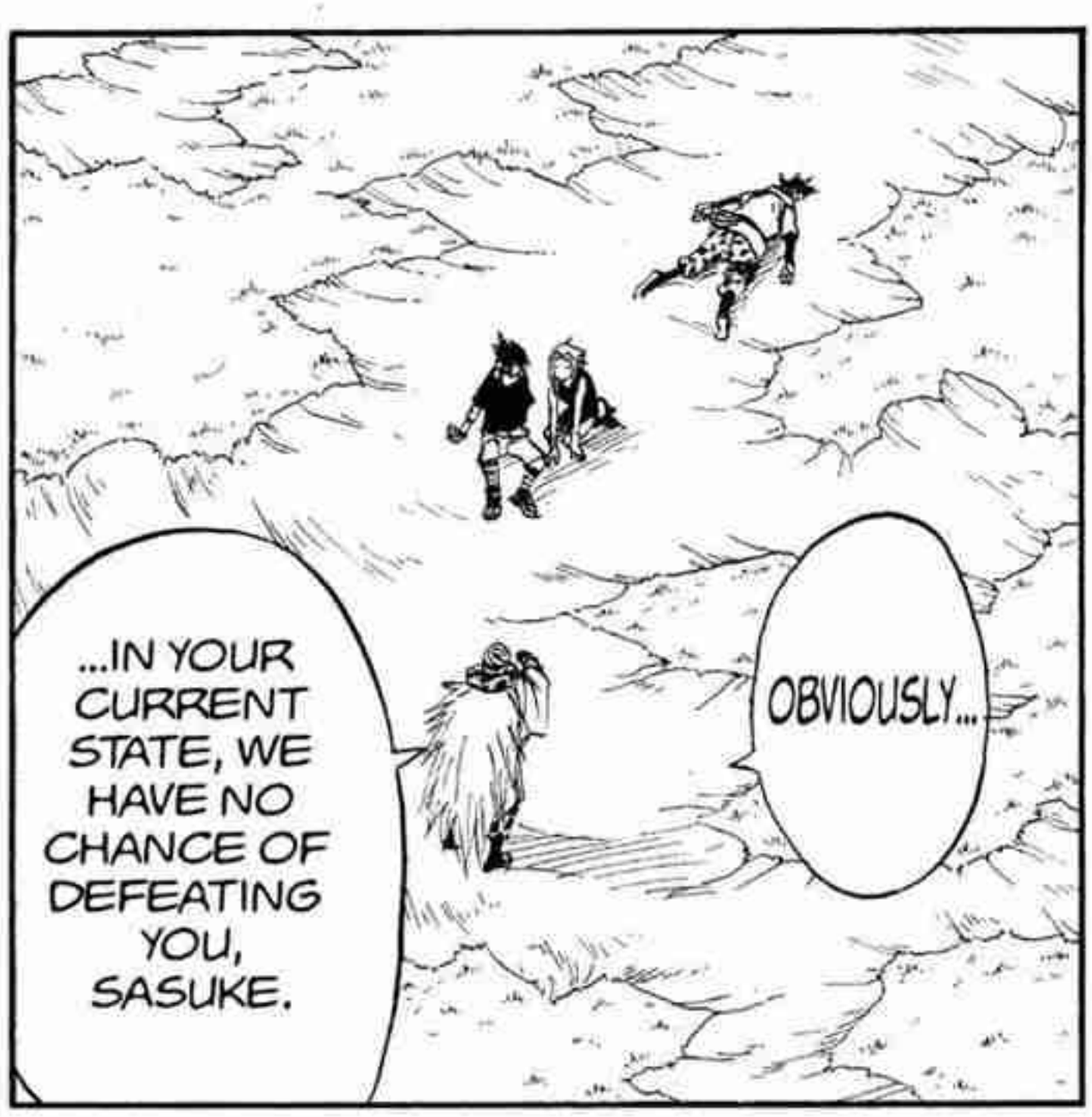
PLEASE...
...PLEASE, STOP...




SHFFFF

SASUKE!
OHHH!
FLOP

WE'RE SAVED... FOR NOW.
...THE MARKS OF THE CURSE ARE FADING...


...IN YOUR CURRENT STATE, WE HAVE NO CHANCE OF DEFEATING YOU, SASUKE.
OBVIOUSLY...

!!
!!
YOU'RE PRETTY TOUGH!

SHHHH

UNH...
I GIVE YOU MY WORD, ON BEHALF OF US ALL, THAT IF YOU LET US GO NOW...
...THEN THE NEXT TIME WE FACE YOU, WE WILL STAY 'TIL THE BATTLE IS DONE, NO MATTER HOW POORLY WE FARE!
...AND ALLOW US TO LEAVE IN PEACE. AFTER WHAT WE'VE DONE, IT MAY SEEM A LOT TO ASK...
...BUT SOMETHING BIG IS AFOOT THAT MERITS FURTHER INVESTIGATION AND CONFIRMATION!

PLEASE ACCEPT THIS IS A TOKEN OF MY ADMIRATION...
...AND AS SOME REPARATION FOR YOUR TROUBLE...
TAP

HUF
HUF
HUF
!

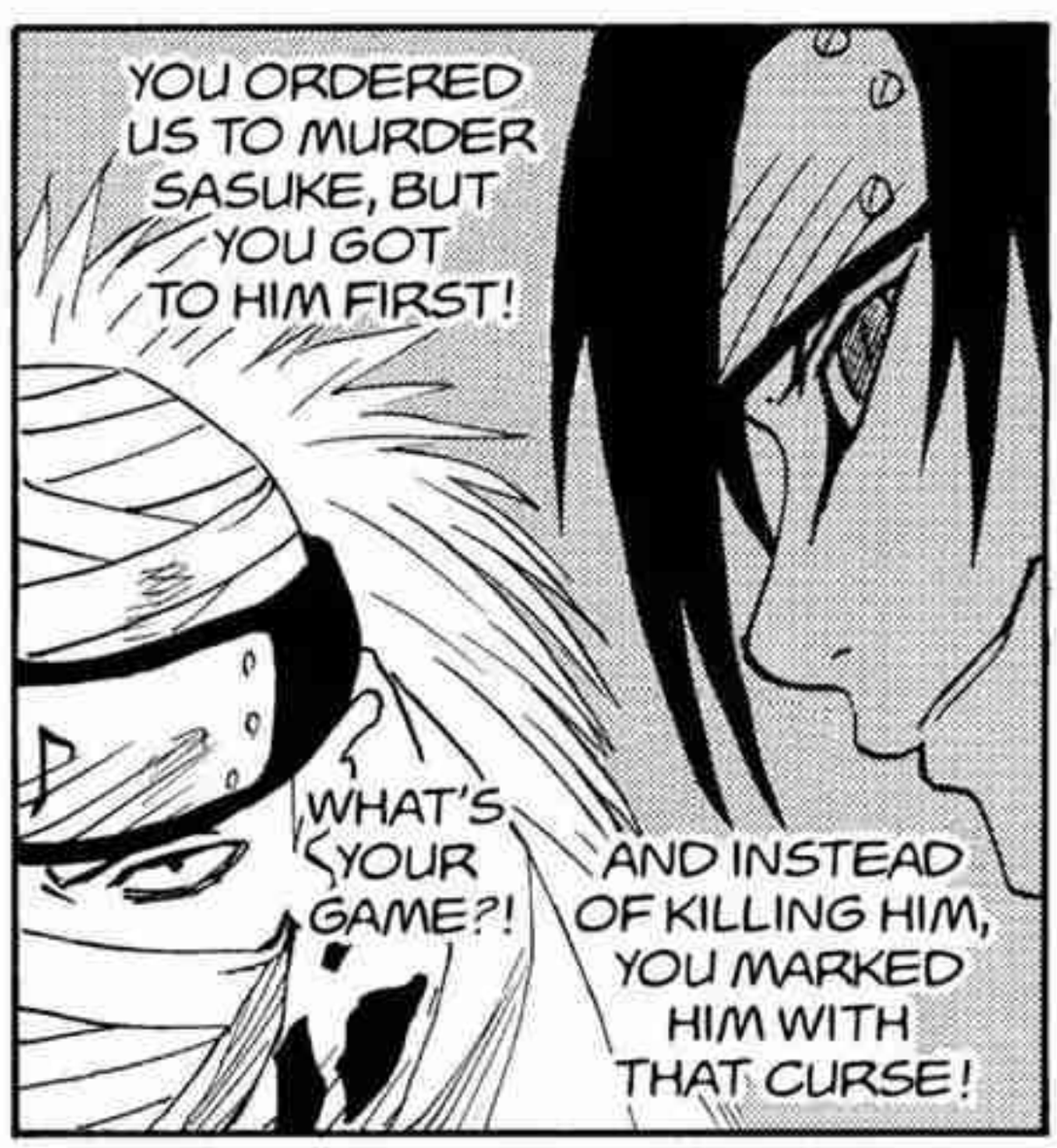
WAIT!!

SKFF
SKFF

AND... WHY WAS SASUKE THE ONE HE CHOSE?!

YOU'VE GOT TO TELL ME! WHO IS OROCHIMARU?

WHAT DID HE DO TO SASUKE?!



READ THIS WAY

I HAD NO IDEA THE UCHIHA CLAN WERE SO STRONG...
...THAT CHAKRA'S NOT NORMAL.

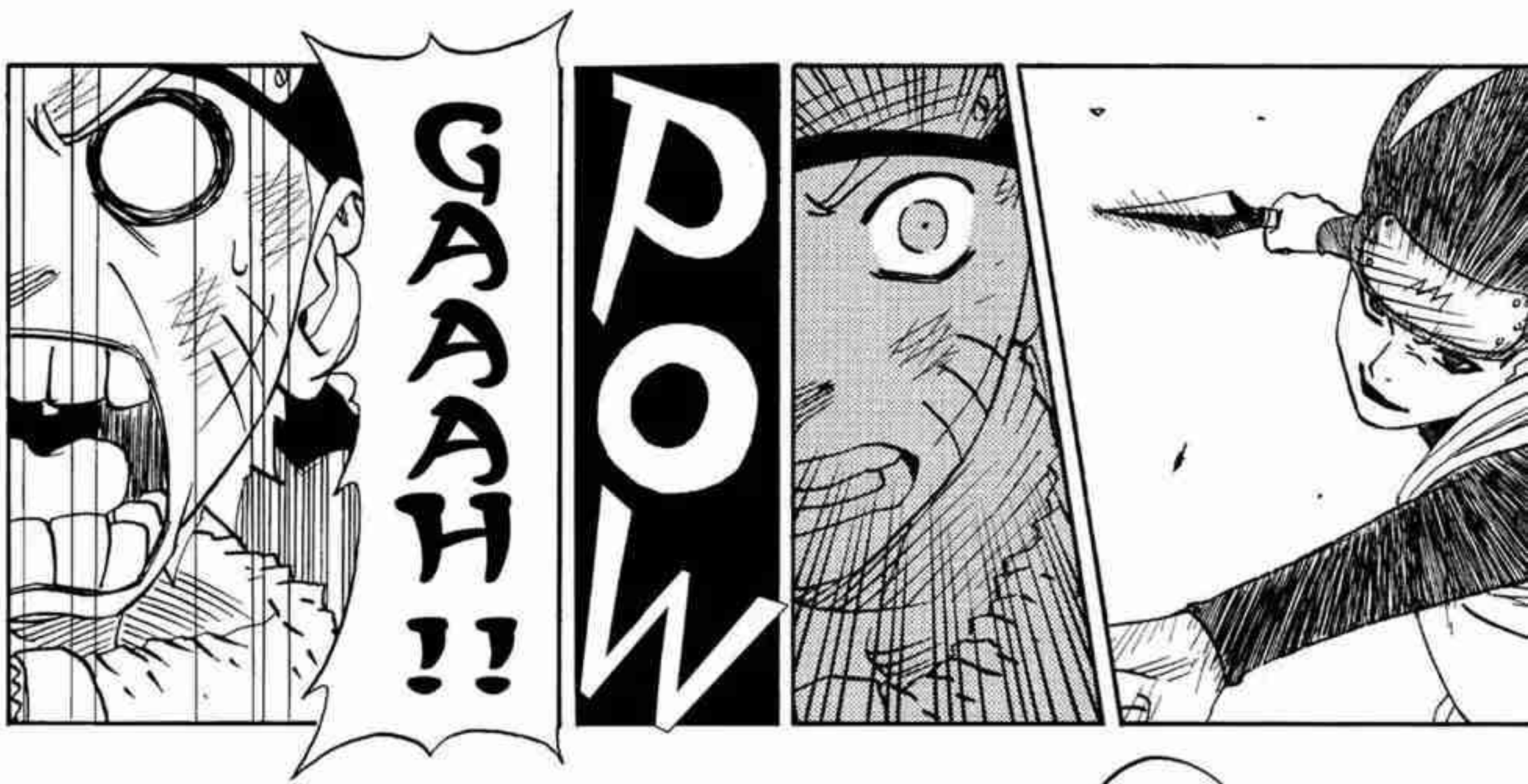
HEY! ARE YOU ALL ALL RIGHT?!
SHHHH
I HOPE IT'S NOT AN IMPOSITION, INO, BUT I'M LEAVING LEE IN YOUR CARE.
TAK

SASUKE...
WHAT... HAPPENED TO ME...?

OH! OH! CAN I?
SO WHAT ABOUT THIS ONE?!
SHALL WE KICK HIM UNTIL HE'S AWAKE?!

YOU CAN COUNT ON ME, SAKURA. I'LL PROTECT YOU!

Number 57: Ten Hours Earlier...

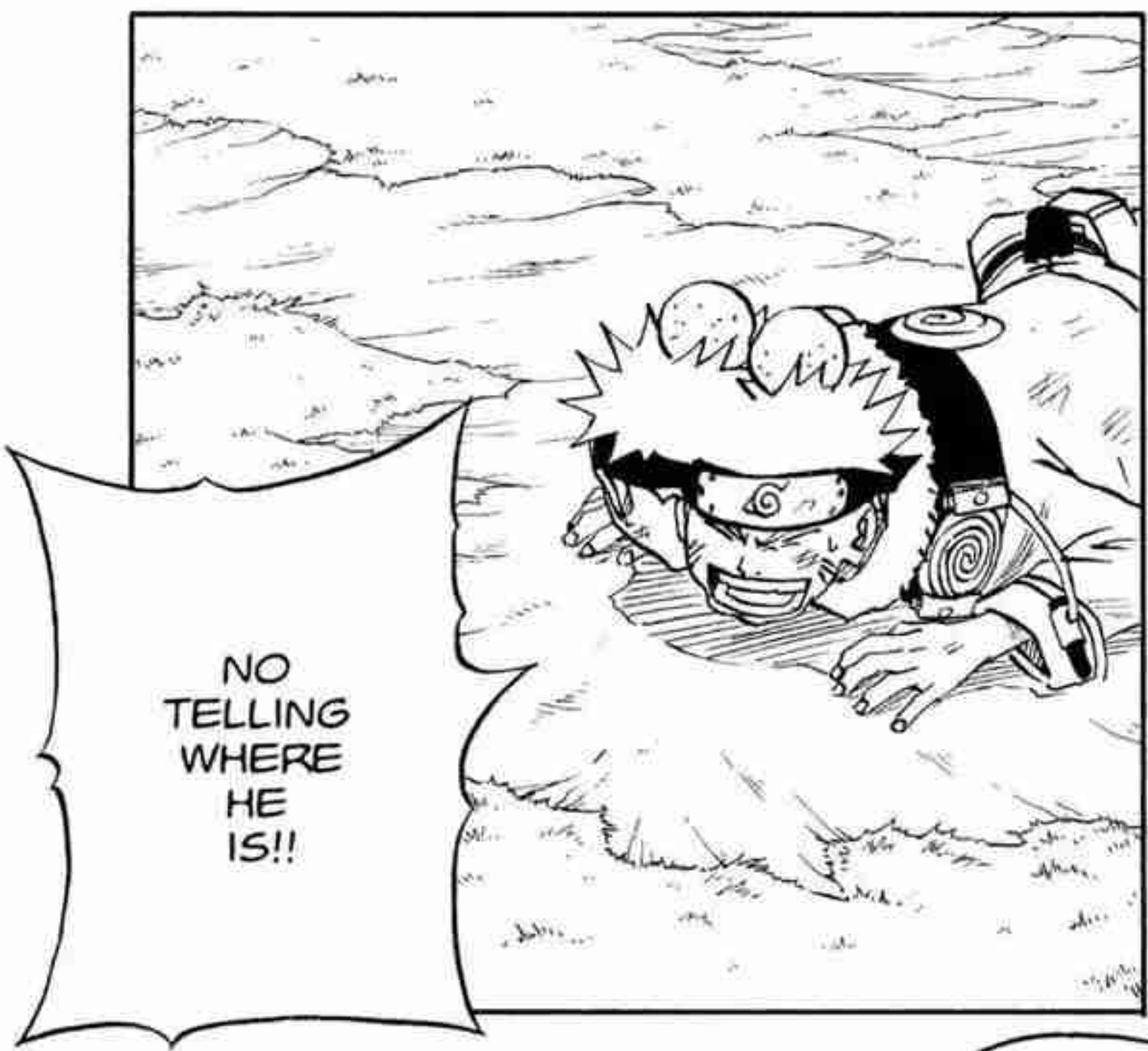

GAAH!!
POW

!

OW!

HEYYY!
WHERE'D HE GO...?

...!


NO TELLING WHERE HE IS!!

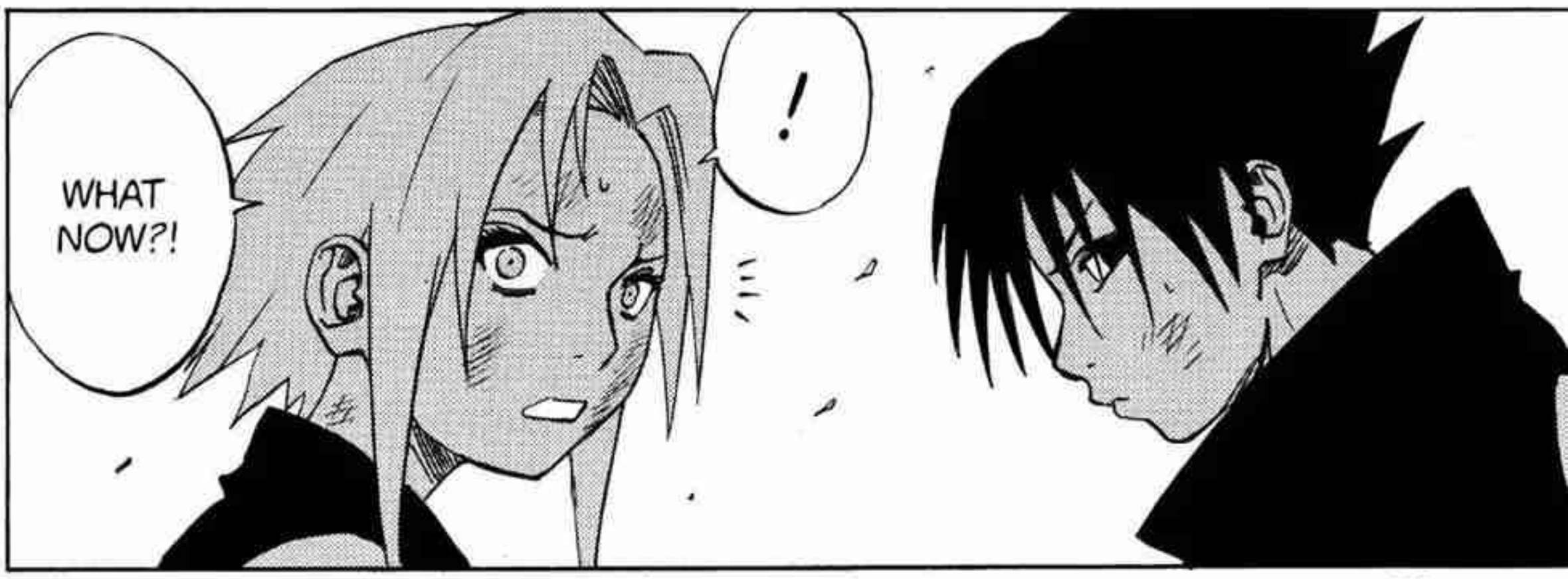
EVERYBODY, GET DOWN! NOW!!
WHUMP

POKE
YIPE!
!!

THE IDIOT... HE'S FINALLY WAKING UP!!

!
!
NARUTO...

POKE
POKE
...
DON'T HAVE ANY IMPULSE CONTROL AT ALL, DO YOU?



FLUF
FLIP
I WANTED TO UPDATE MY IMAGE!!
A NEW LOOK!

SAKURA... YOUR HAIR!!
TAK
OH!
UM... YOU MEAN THIS?

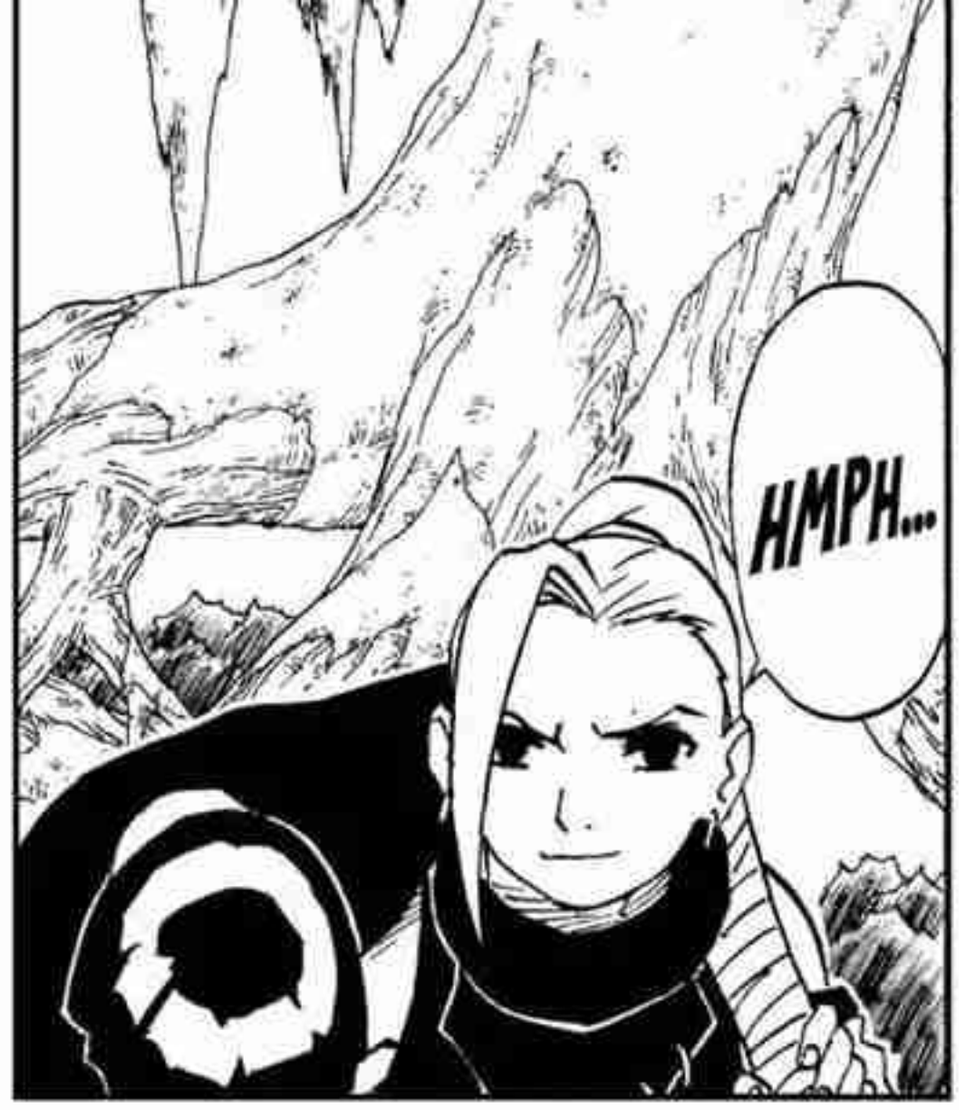
TAK

HMMM...
LONG HAIR IS FUN, TOO... AND I REALLY LIKED HAVING IT...
...BUT LET'S BE REALISTIC. WE'RE IN THE FOREST, FIGHTING ENEMIES, MOVING FAST... AND THIS IS SO LOW-MAINTENANCE!!
TAK

...

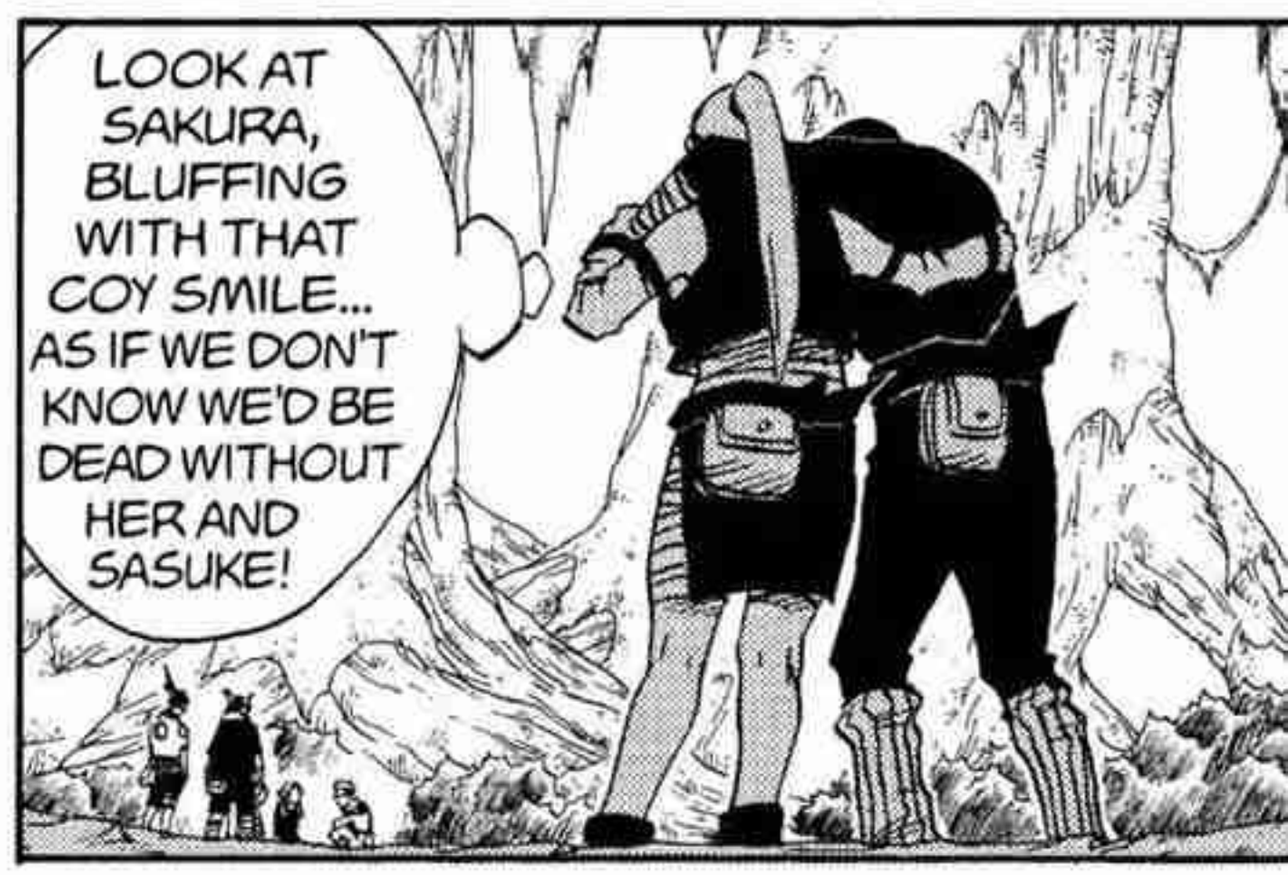
...

-SIGH-
EXPLANATIONS ARE SO TEDIOUS!
...AND WHY ARE THEY HERE?!
WHO ARE ALL THESE GUYS...


HMPH...

THESE GUYS SAVED OUR BUTTS.

!
HOP


LOOK AT SAKURA, BLUFFING WITH THAT COY SMILE... AS IF WE DON'T KNOW WE'D BE DEAD WITHOUT HER AND SASUKE!

TAD
LET ME TAKE HIM FROM HERE.

TENTEN? WHEN DID YOU GET HERE?
HUH?
WE CAME TO RESCUE YOU!

WHA...?!
RATTLE
RATTLE
LEE! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?! PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER!!

...
OH...

SASUKE SCARED THEM OFF!
...HUNH...? WHERE DID THE OTONIN SOUND NINJA GO...?

IF LEE HAD FACED THOSE GUYS BY HIMSELF, WITH NO DISTRACTIONS, HE COULD HAVE TAKEN THEM!!
OH, FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!!

LOOK AT YOU! YOU'RE A MESS!
WHAT WERE YOU THINKING, GOING OFF HALF-COCKED LIKE THAT, ALONE?!
S-SAKURA NEEDED ME! SAVING HER WAS MY SACRED DUTY... AS A MAN!
...
!

I KNOW YOU! THE UNIBROW!!!
BOUNCE
HEY!
!

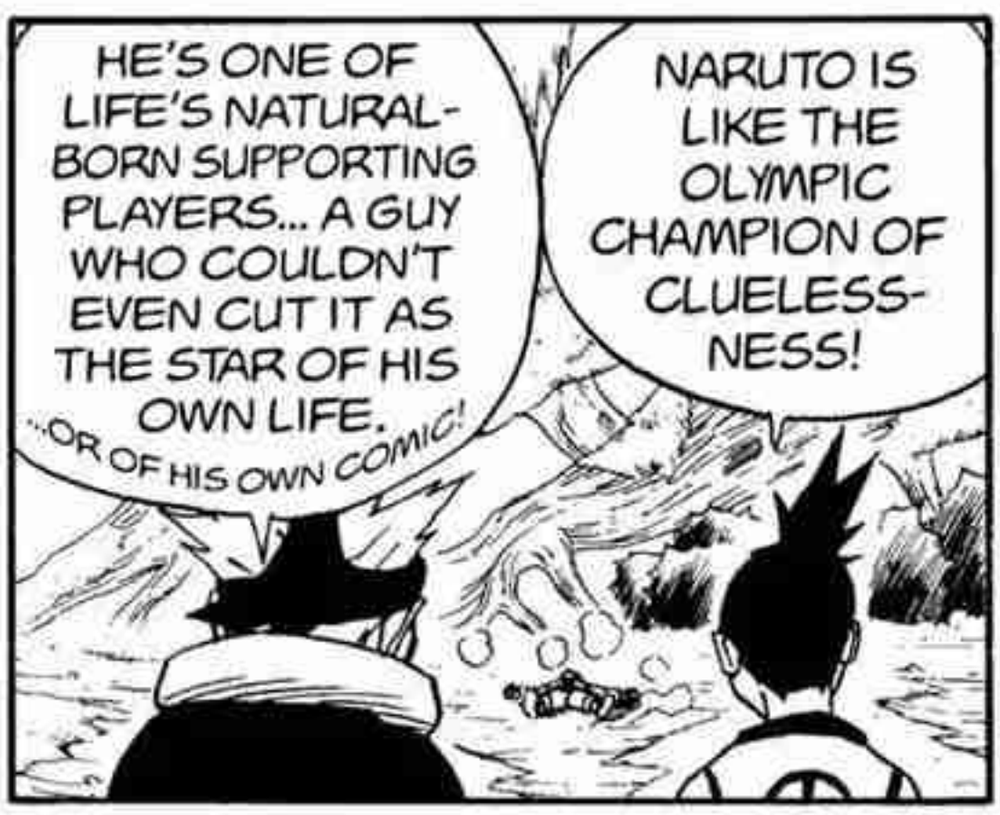
YOUR WORDS ARE SO SHARP, IF I TRY TO ANSWER BACK, I'LL CUT MYSELF!
YOU'RE AN IDIOT. YOU KNOW THAT, RIGHT?
SLUMP

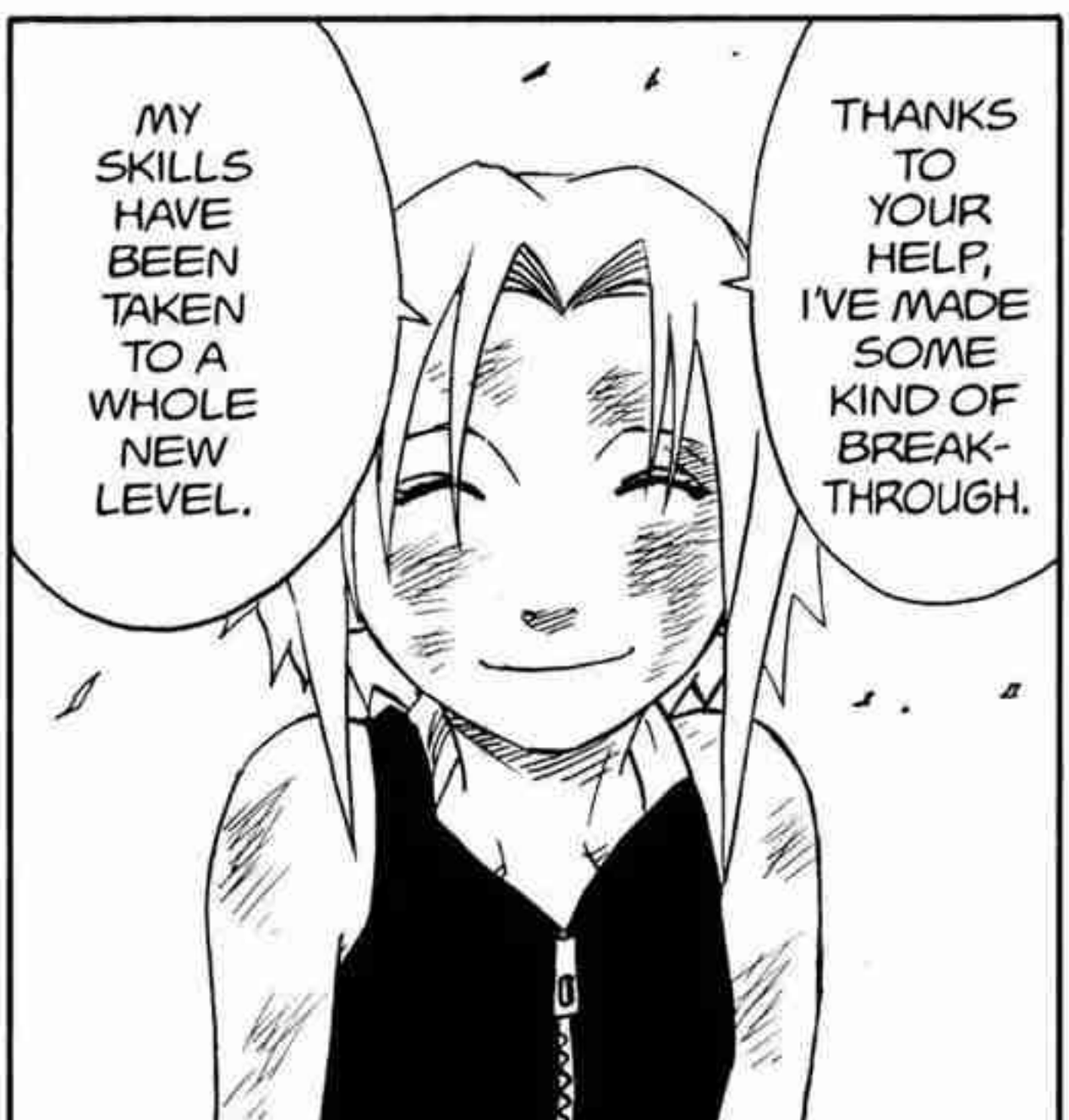
PW

ACK!!

DON'T YOU TALK TO LEE LIKE THAT!!

!



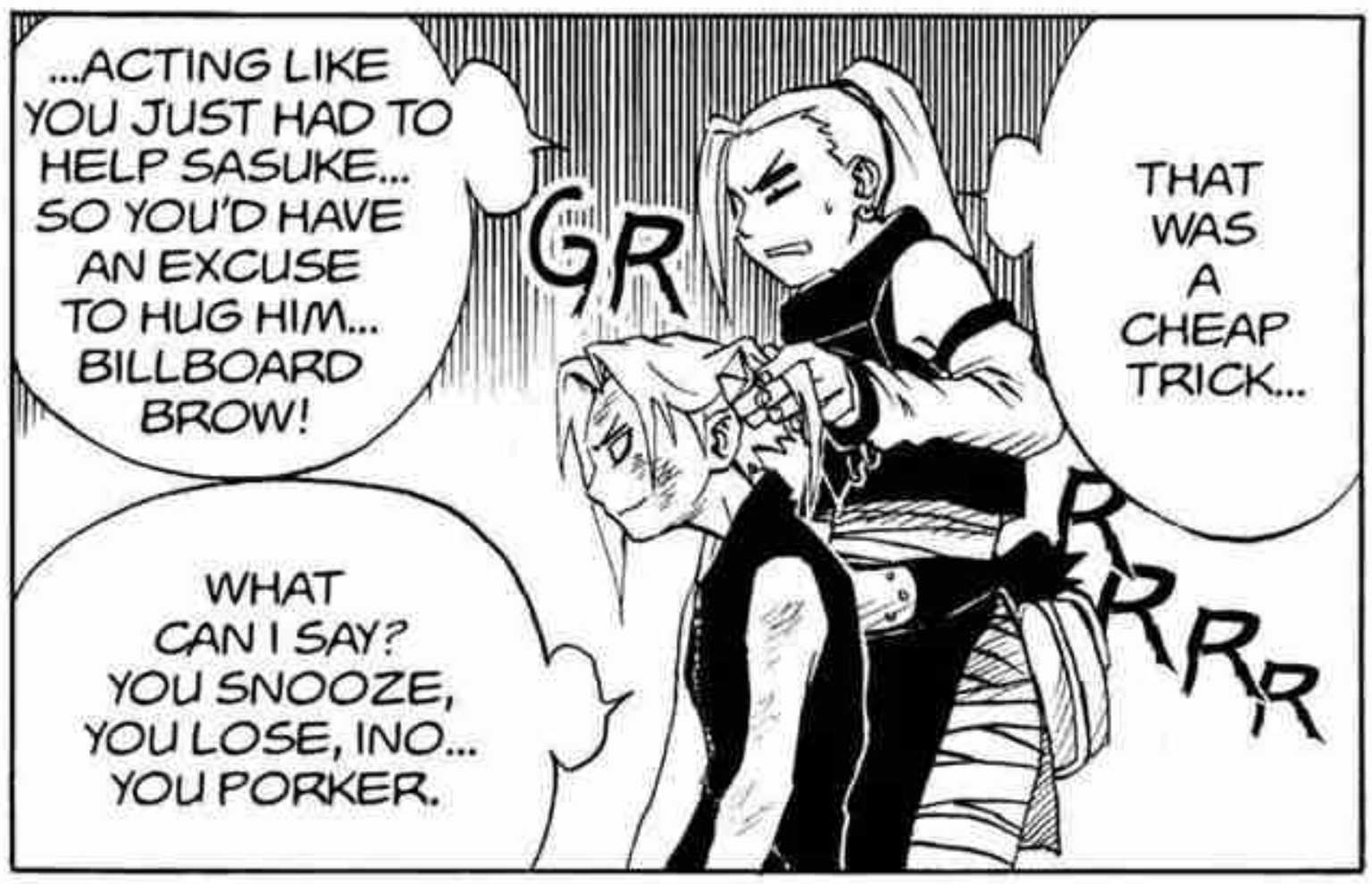


IT WAS SASUKE!
!
...I AM NOT WORTHY!
SNIFF SNIFF
SAKURA...
LEE WAS BEATEN SENSELESS?!
WHAT?!
...THAT HE COULD ROUT THOSE SAME OTONIN WHO BEAT ME SENSE-LESS.
IT SEEMS SO NATURAL...
...THAT A MEMBER OF THE RENOWNED UCHIHA CLAN WOULD BE THE ONE WITH POWERS SO INCREDIBLE...
!
SAKURA...
WERE THE OTONIN REALLY THAT STRONG?
I DON'T GET IT.
?
THE FIGHTING LOTUS OF KONOHA VILLAGE WILL GROW AND FLOWER AGAIN!

I SWEAR IT!
BEFORE WE MEET AGAIN, I WILL HAVE BECOME A STRONGER MAN.
OH, BROTHER!
...
YEAH!
...
...
I'LL HELP YOU TRIM YOUR HAIR... TO EVEN UP THE ENDS!!
?!
OH, SAKURA! IF YOU'D LIKE...
...

SHLUK

WELL, AREN'T YOU SWEET?


...ACTING LIKE YOU JUST HAD TO HELP SASUKE... SO YOU'D HAVE AN EXCUSE TO HUG HIM... BILLBOARD BROW!
GR
THAT WAS A CHEAP TRICK...
RRRR
WHAT CAN I SAY? YOU SNOOZE, YOU LOSE, INO... YOU PORKER.

BY BIRTH... AND BY HIS OWN ABILITIES... HE'S A FORMIDABLE FOE.

UCHIHA...
SASUKE...

WHOOOO

AND ABOUT 10 HOURS EARLIER THAN THAT (AROUND 8:00 PM ON THE FIRST DAY IN THE FOREST)...

GRRRRR

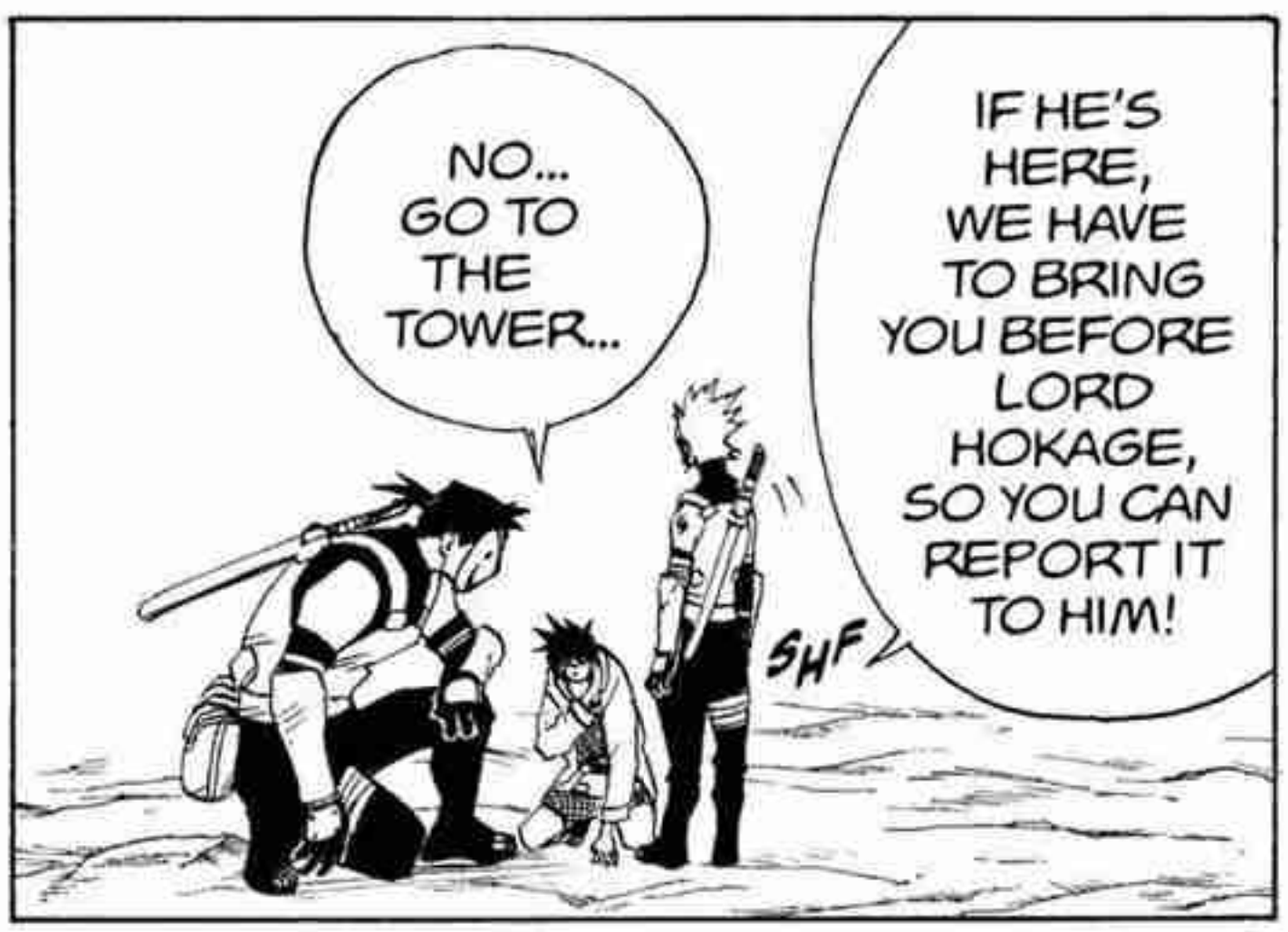
GRRRRRRR

GRRRRR
HUF
I DO NOT HAVE TIME FOR THIS!
PUF
SLA
RRROWWR!
SH
DOINK
?
THE ART OF PARALYSIS!
TH-THIS LOOKS LIKE--
DOINK
GRRRRRR
DOINK
!!

GRUNT
GRUNT
GRUNT
FANCY MEETING YOU HERE, ANKO!
-SIGH-
YOU TWO MUST BE THE SLOWEST-MOVING COVERT OPERATIVES I'VE EVER MET!

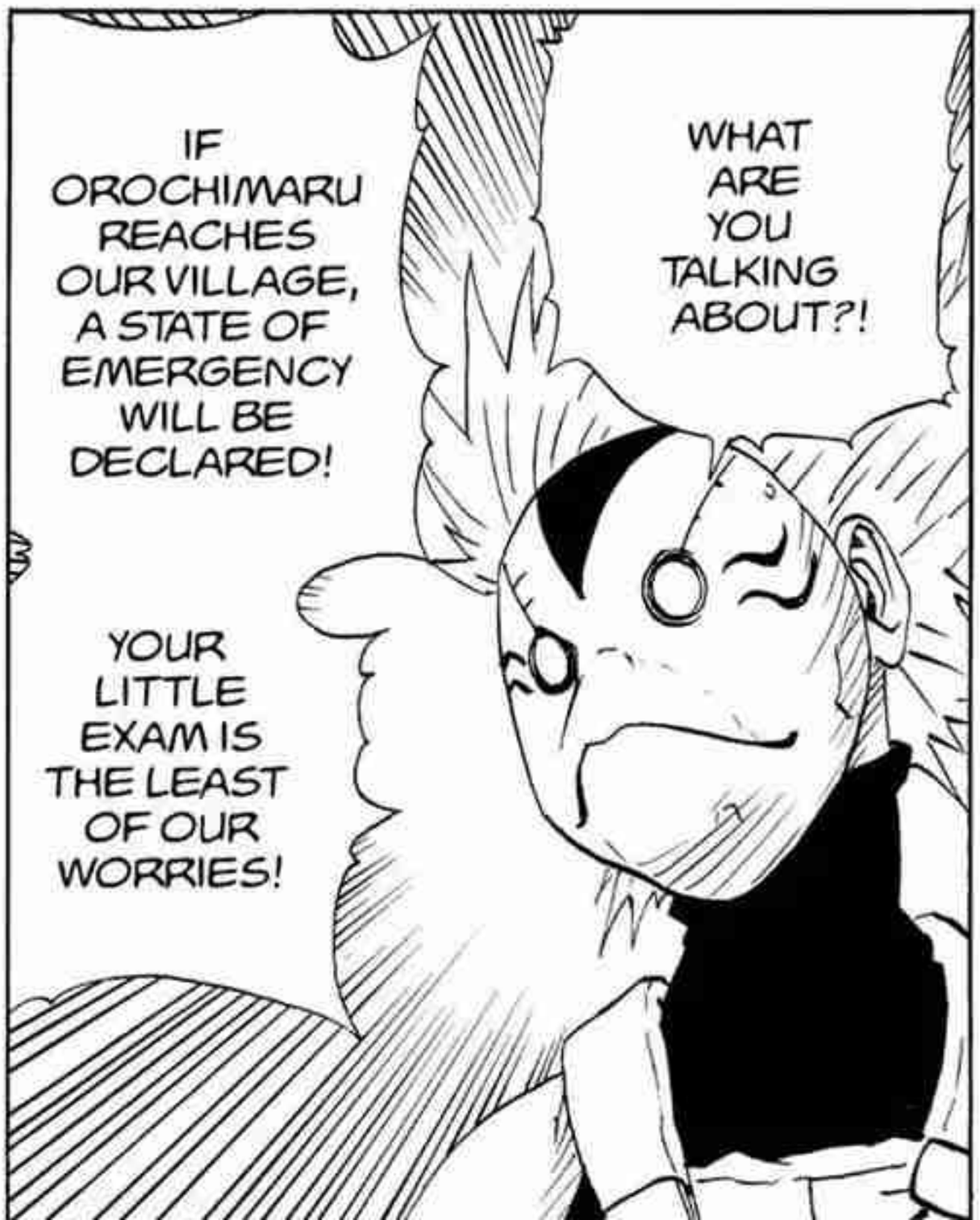
NOD

THE MARK OF THE CURSE WE'VE BEEN WORRIED ABOUT HAS FLOATED TO THE SURFACE.
BUT DON'T TELL ME THAT IT--?!


NO... GO TO THE TOWER...
IF HE'S HERE, WE HAVE TO BRING YOU BEFORE LORD HOKAGE, SO YOU CAN REPORT IT TO HIM!
SHF

OROCHIMARU? REALLY?

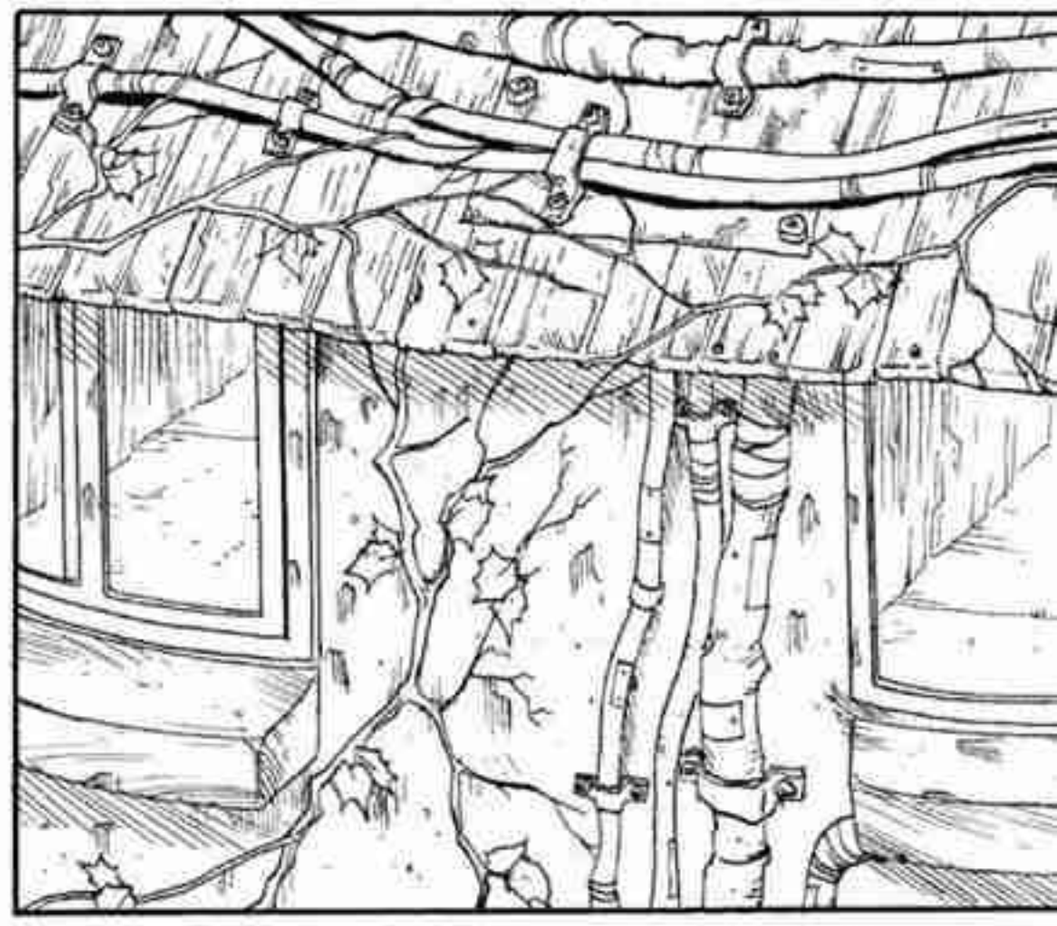
ASK LORD HOKAGE TO JOIN US THERE AS WELL...
TRUST ME... I'LL EXPLAIN WHY WHEN WE REACH THE TOWER.


IF OROCHIMARU REACHES OUR VILLAGE, A STATE OF EMERGENCY WILL BE DECLARED!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!
YOUR LITTLE EXAM IS THE LEAST OF OUR WORRIES!

WHY?!

BUT THE EXAM MUST GO ON!!

WHAT'S HAPPENED IS A DISASTER...



WE'RE RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF SOMETHING VITAL!
(HUF)
NOW WHAT?!
OBSERVE!!
FWUP
THERE IS SOMETHING I MUST TELL YOU RIGHT AWAY...
SLAM
THANK GOODNESS YOU'RE HERE, ANKO!
!
VIDEO SURVEILLANCE, EH?
?!
THAT LOOKS LIKE...
!
16:09
IT IS. IT WAS SHOT FROM THE INTERIOR OF THE TOWER... A MERE HOUR AND 37 MINUTES AFTER THE SECOND EXAM BEGAN!
STAB
RIGHT THERE... NOTICE THE TIME AND DATE STAMP...

THE THREE NINJA FROM THE LAND OF SAND...

...HAVE ALREADY COMPLETED THE SECOND EXAM.

THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI
MY PERSONAL HISTORY, PART TWO: STARTING SCHOOL

WHEN I WAS OLD ENOUGH TO GO TO KINDERGARTEN, I BECAME INTERESTED IN A WHOLE VARIETY OF NEW THINGS. BUGS, THE FLOW OF A RIVER... IF SOMETHING CAUGHT MY ATTENTION, IT WOULD HOLD MY FOCUS UNTIL SOMEONE INTERRUPTED ME. I'M TOLD MY MOTHER AND MY TEACHERS HAD TO COME LOOKING FOR ME ALL THE TIME. AT HOME, I DID THE SAME THING. WHEN I WAS WATCHING TV, I'D TUNE OUT THE REST OF THE WORLD. EVEN IF MY FATHER CALLED ME BY MY PET NICKNAME, MABO, AND PHYSICALLY TURNED MY FACE SO HE COULD SEE ME--UNDERSTANDABLY WANTING HIS CHILD TO PAY A LITTLE ATTENTION TO HIM--I STILL CONCENTRATED ON THE SCREEN. HE SAYS THAT MY FOCUS REMAINED SO COMPLETELY ON THE TV AND MY FACE GOT SO INTENSE THAT IT WAS A LITTLE SCARY. AND IT MADE HIM ENVY THE TELEVISION. BACK THEN, TV WAS THE MOST INCREDIBLY THRILLING, STIMULATING THING I COULD IMAGINE. ONE OF MY FAVORITES WAS "DORAEMON." I WOULD DRAW THAT CHARACTER'S FACE OVER AND OVER AGAIN, NO MATTER WHERE I WAS. ACTUALLY, ALL MY KINDERGARTEN CLASSMATES LOVED DORAEMON, TOO, AND ALSO USED TO TRY AND DRAW HIM WITH ME. BUT I WAS A TOTAL STICKLER ABOUT IT, ESPECIALLY ABOUT THE WAY THE CHARACTER'S EYES HAD TO BE DRAWN. THE DIAGRAMS BELOW SHOW WHAT I MEAN. EVERYONE KEPT DRAWING THE CHARACTER THE WAY HE LOOKS IN FIGURE 2...BUT FIGURE 1 IS THE VERSION THAT'S CORRECT! I ALWAYS POINTED THAT OUT TO THEM AND LECTURED THEM ABOUT THE RIGHT WAY TO DO IT. IN RETROSPECT, I'D HAVE TO SAY I WAS AN OBNOXIOUS LITTLE PERFECTIONIST. BACK THEN, I EVEN CONDEMNED ANYONE WHO USED THE "DORAEMON DRAWING SONG"* TO DRAW DORAEMON AS A HERETIC!

*EDITOR'S NOTE: "THE DORAEMON DRAWING SONG" (OR "DORAEMON NO O-EKAKI UTA") GIVES STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS FOR HOW TO DRAW DORAEMON; PRESUMABLY, USING THE SONG SEEMED LIKE A COP-OUT TO THE KINDERGARTEN-AGED KISHIMOTO.

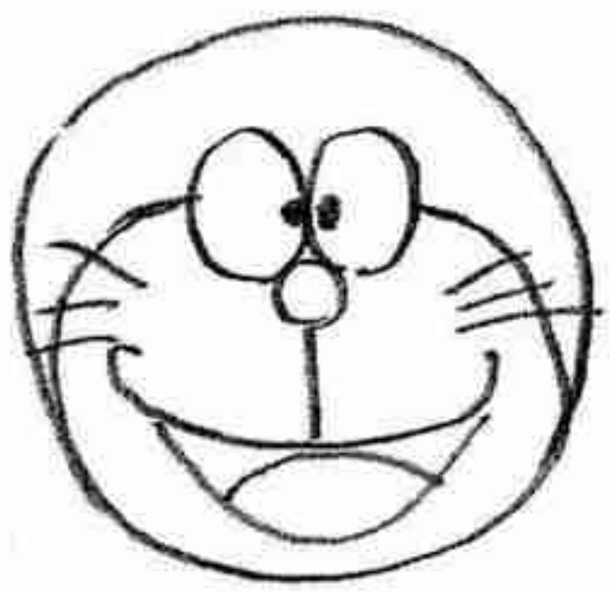


FIG. 1

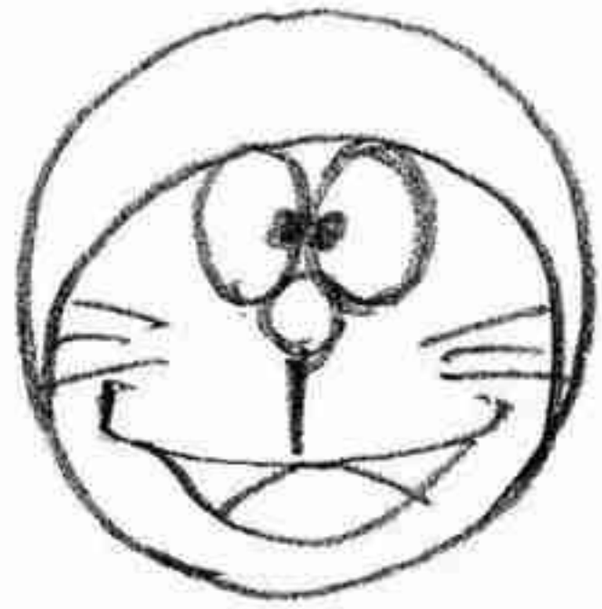


FIG. 2

AKAMARU
AKAMARU
AKAMARU
Number 58: Witnesses...!!

愛

!
IT'S MORE THAN THAT...
(PUF)
(HUF)

...WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
...

THOSE THREE HAVE FAR EXCEEDED THE SKILLS OF MERE GENIN JUNIOR NINJA!
THEY'VE BEATEN THE PREVIOUS RECORD BY OVER FOUR HOURS!

ESPECIALLY THIS BROWN-HAIRED BOY WITH THE TATTOO...
WHAT ABOUT HIM...?

...AND THEY'VE STROLLED THROUGH IT LIKE IT WAS A DAY AT THE BEACH!
...THEIR PATH FILLED WITH HAZARDOUS TERRAIN, POISON INSECTS, SAVAGE BEASTS...
IT'S ROUGHLY 10 km FROM THE GATES WHERE THE STUDENTS BEGAN THE EXAM TO THIS TOWER...

DON'T YOU SEE IT?

...HUH?
!

OH, I GET IT! THAT'S AMAZING!

...
OH...!

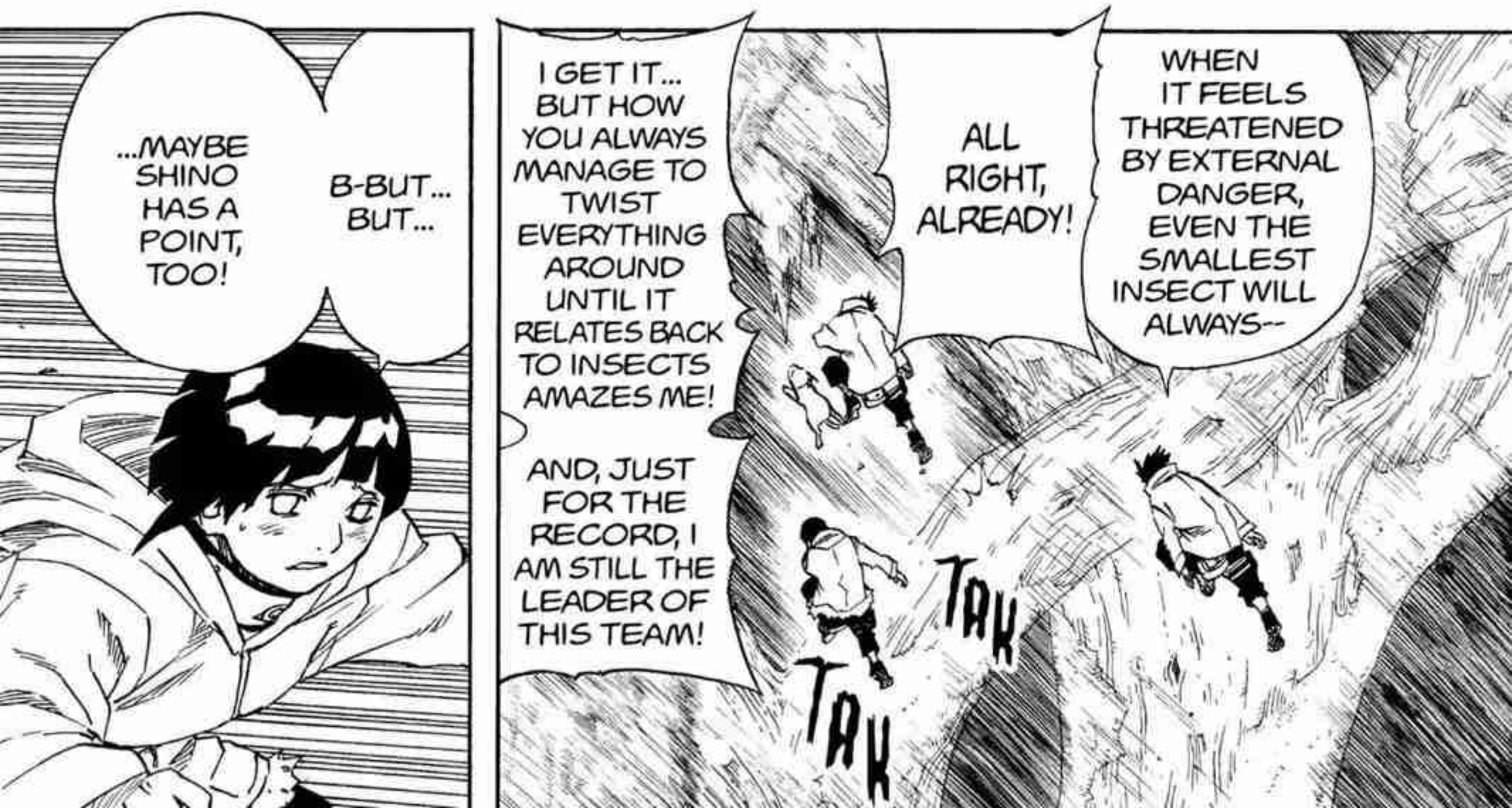
WHAT ARE YOU GOING ON ABOUT?
?!

LOOK AT HIS CLOTHES... HIS BODY...

...AND NOT SO MUCH AS A SMUDGE ON HIS CLOTHES!

THERE'S NOT A MARK ON HIM ANYWHERE...

DAY ONE, APPROXIMATELY 50 MINUTES AFTER THE START OF THE SECOND EXAM...



...
NARUTO... I HOPE YOU'RE ALL RIGHT...

ALL RIGHT, HINATA! FINE!!!

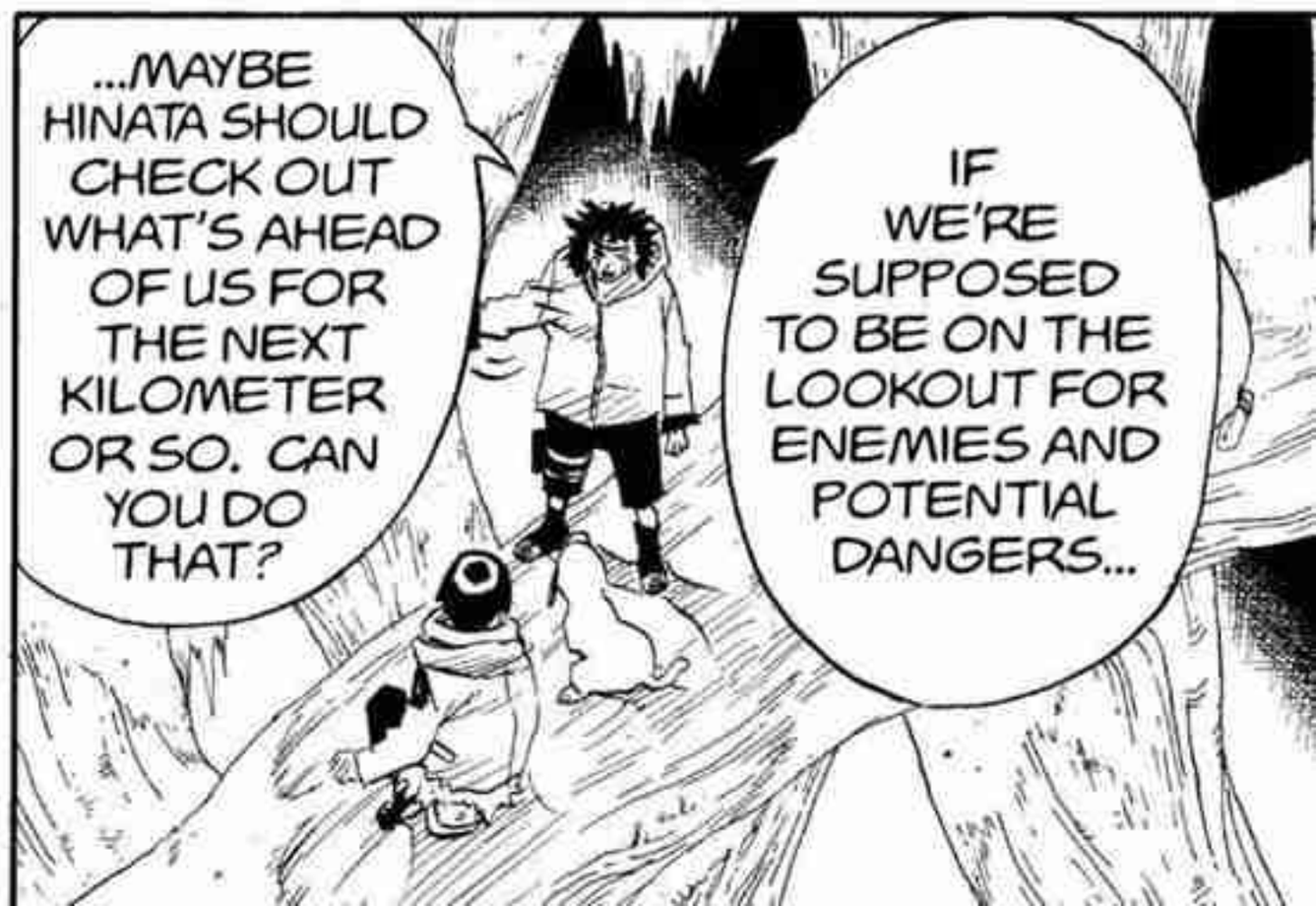
HOLD IT!
HEY!
!
!
SHHHM

SNIF
SNIF
!!
SNIF SNIF

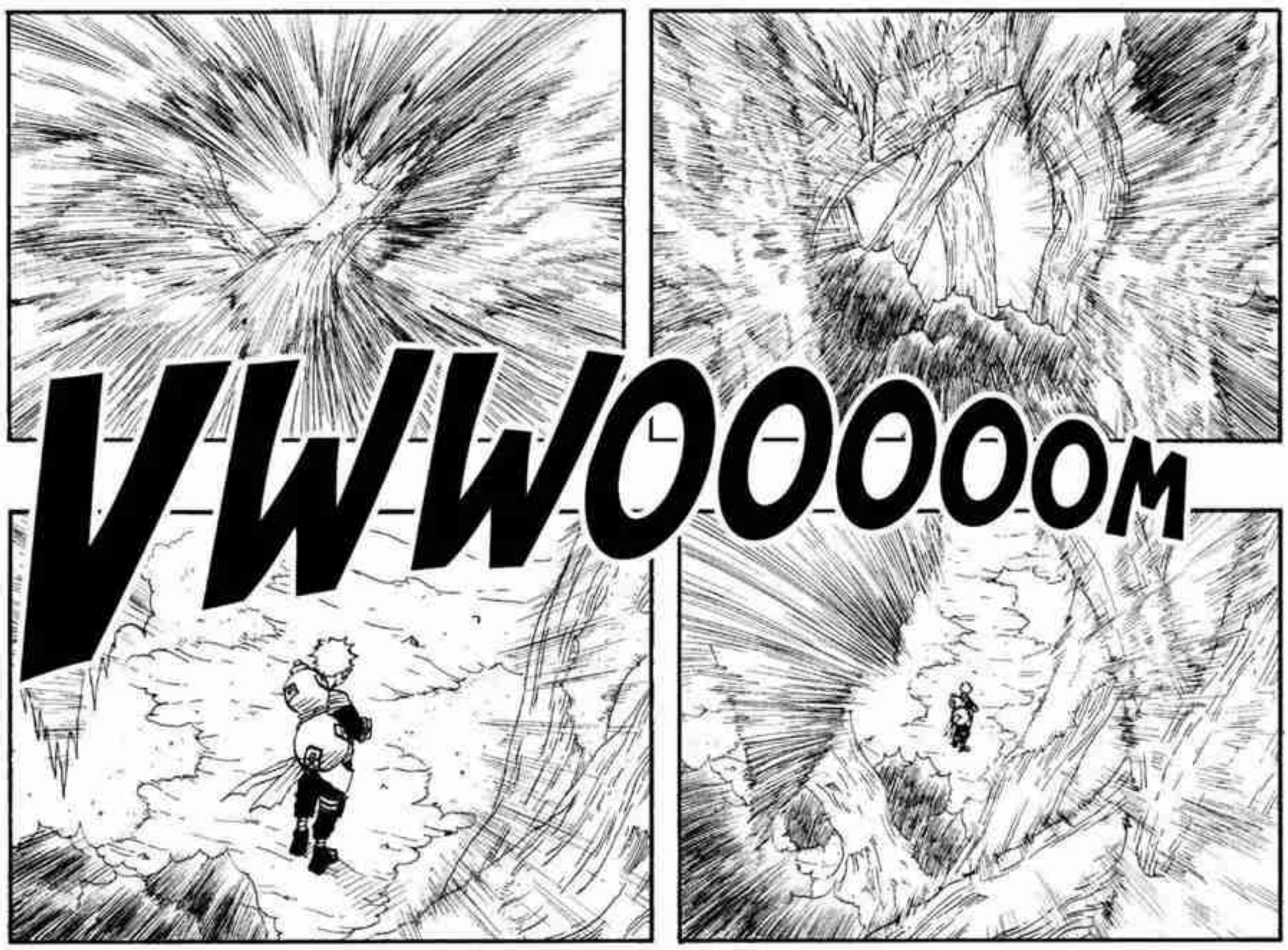
?!
SHHHM

?!
SHHHM

SURE... I'LL TAKE A LOOK.
SHF


...MAYBE HINATA SHOULD CHECK OUT WHAT'S AHEAD OF US FOR THE NEXT KILOMETER OR SO. CAN YOU DO THAT?
IF WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR ENEMIES AND POTENTIAL DANGERS...

GLEAM
BYAKUGAN! THE ALL-SEEING EVIL EYE, HEREDITARY TRAIT OF THE MEMBERS OF CLAN HYUGA!


VWWOOOOOOM

I THINK IT'S... AROUND SIX PEOPLE...

IT LOOKS LIKE... SOMEONE'S IN A FIGHT...

HUH?

LET'S GO TAKE A LOOK!
!
!

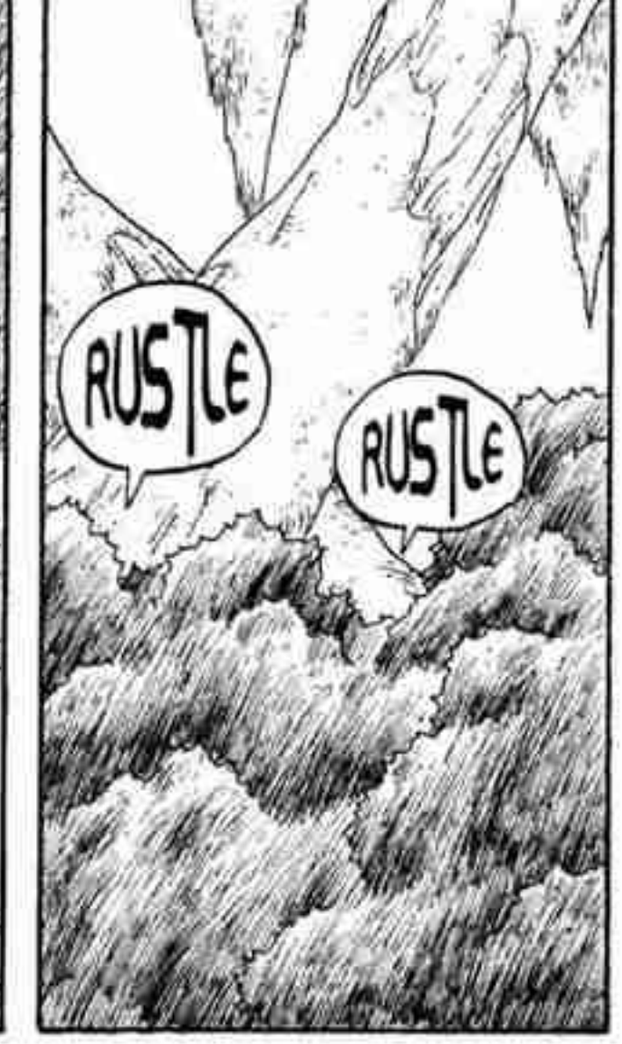
KIBA... WHAT WOULD THAT ACCOMPLISH?!

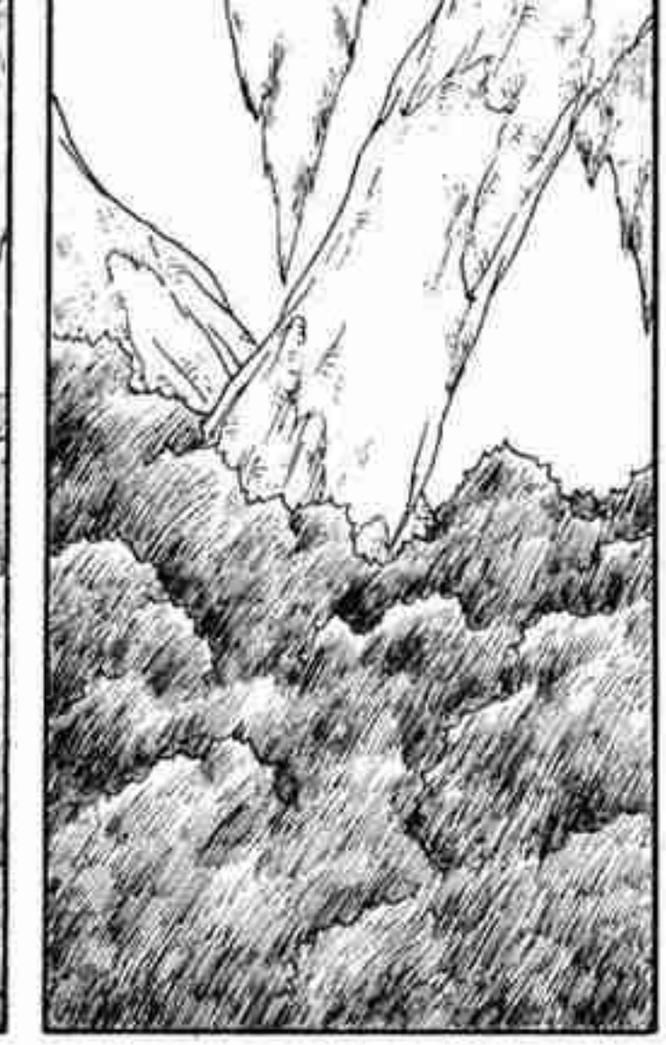
THE MORE EXTRA SETS WE GRAB, THE FEWER WILL BE LEFT FOR THE TEAMS STILL OUT THERE...
...AND MORE TEAMS WILL FAIL!
TO PASS THE EXAM, WE WERE TOLD TO STEAL AND DELIVER A COMPLETE SET OF ONE HEAVEN SCROLL AND ONE EARTH SCROLL.
NO ONE SAID WE COULDN'T STEAL MORE THAN THAT IF WE WANTED TO!

THAT GUY'S SO UNPLEASANT, EVEN A BUG WOULDN'T BITE HIM!
NOW COME ON!!
HOP!

ALL I WANT IS FOR US TO GO AND LOOK.
IF THINGS SEEM TOO DANGEROUS, WE'LL GO ON OUR WAY!
...B-BUT...

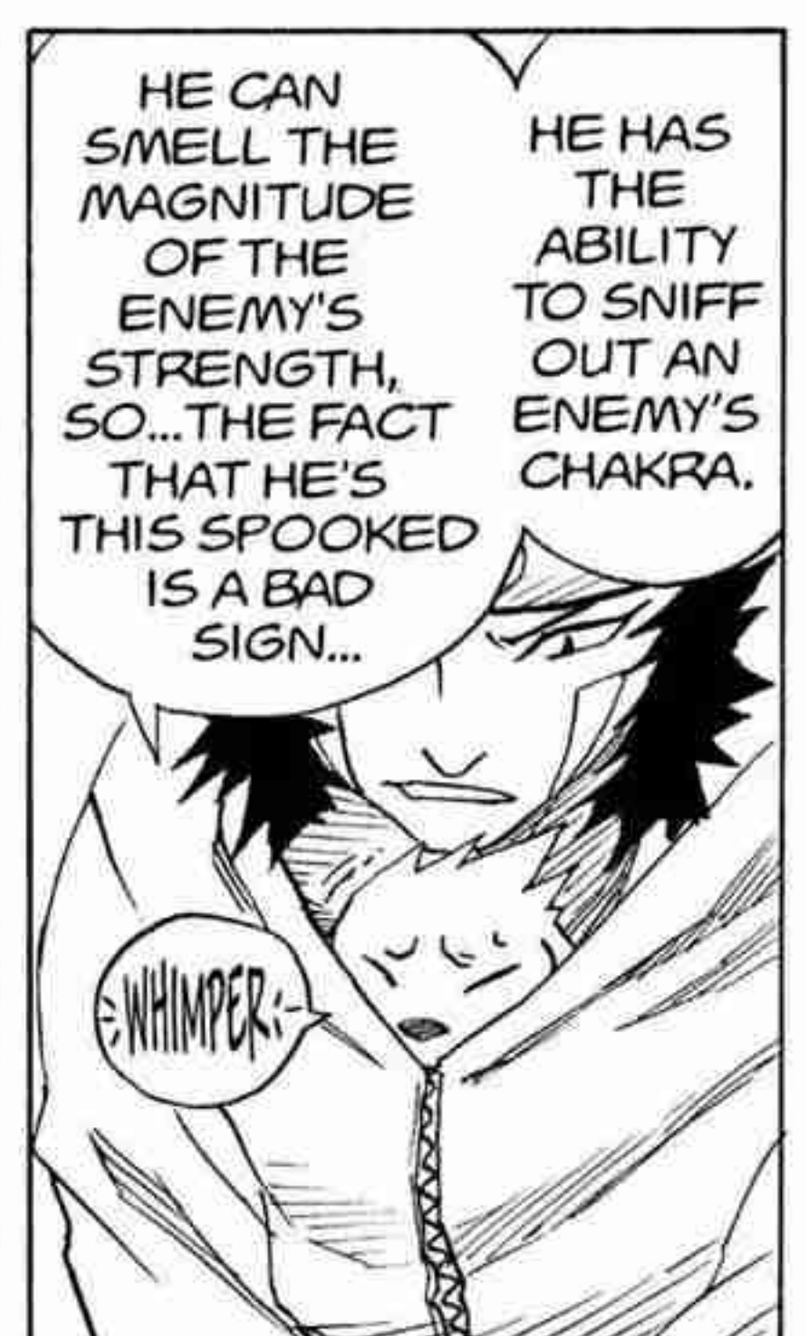
WHINE
SHIVR SHIVR


RUSTLE
RUSTLE



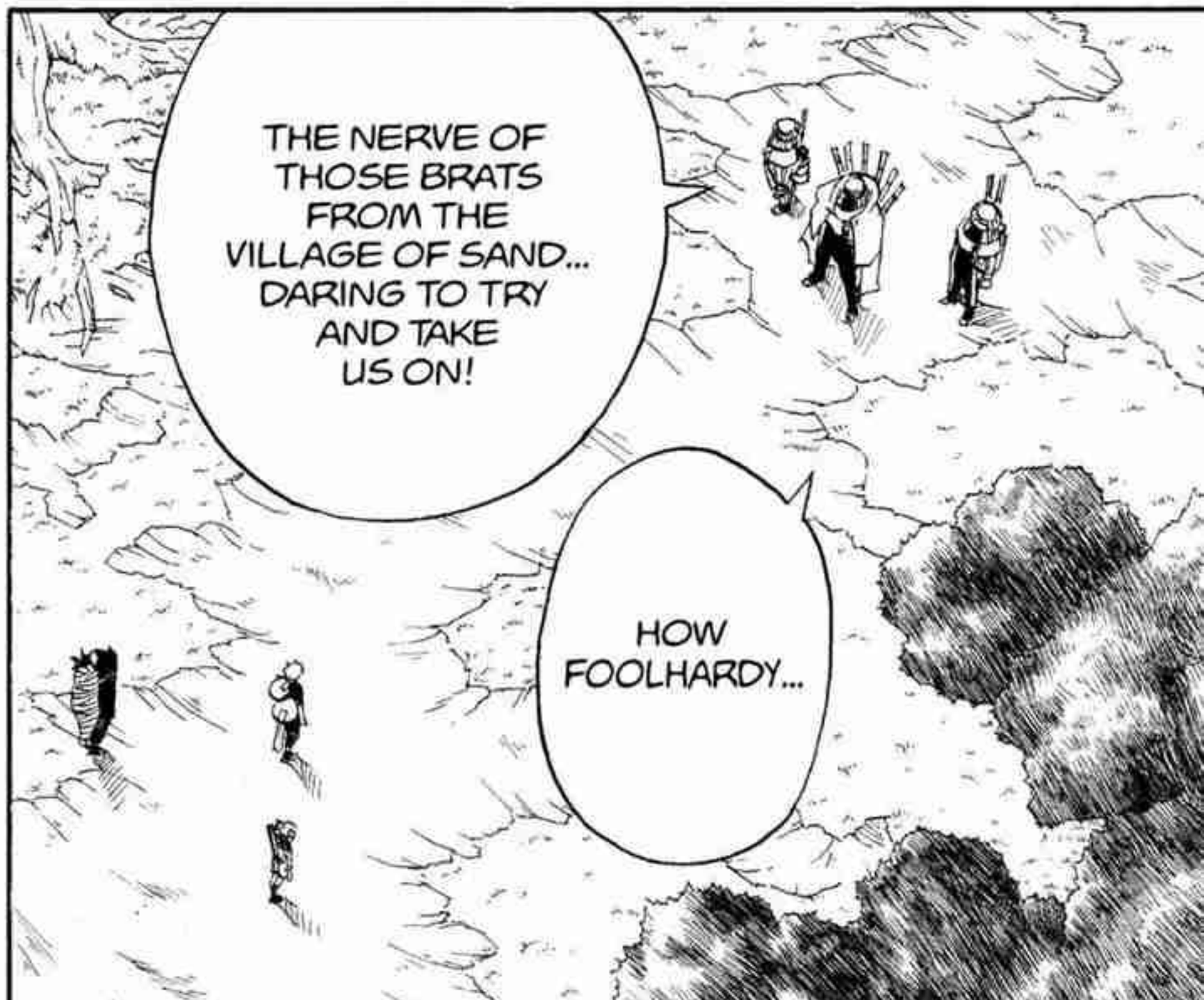
WHY HAVE WE STOPPED?
WH-WHAT'S WRONG?
...WHAT IS IT, AKAMARU...?
!
TAK
TAK
SHIVR SHIVR

WHOEVER'S UP AHEAD... THEY'RE NO ORDINARY FOES.


HE CAN SMELL THE MAGNITUDE OF THE ENEMY'S STRENGTH, SO...THE FACT THAT HE'S THIS SPOOKED IS A BAD SIGN...
HE HAS THE ABILITY TO SNIFF OUT AN ENEMY'S CHAKRA.
WHIMPER

SOMETHING SPOOKED AKAMARU!!
SQUIRM SQUIRM
WH-WHY...?

ONNNNG


THE NERVE OF THOSE BRATS FROM THE VILLAGE OF SAND... DARING TO TRY AND TAKE US ON!
HOW FOOLHARDY...

OWWG

WH-WHAT IS IT, AKAMARU...?!

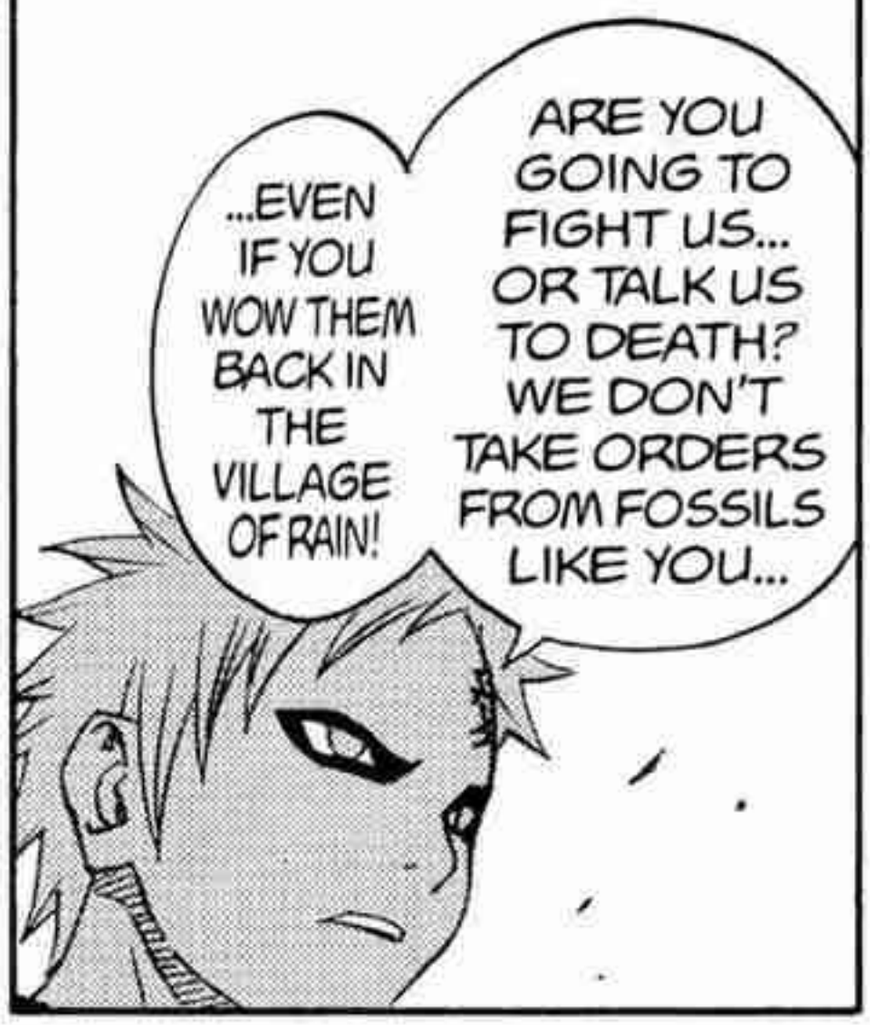
WHIMPER

WHAT IS HE THINKING...?!
LOOK AT THAT LITTLE WORM, TRYING TO TAKE ON THOSE GUYS!

TH-THEY ALL SEEM DANGEROUS... AND STRONG...

WHAT'S HE SAYING, KIBA?
HE'S MOST FRIGHTENED OF THE BIG ONE... VERY DANGEROUS!

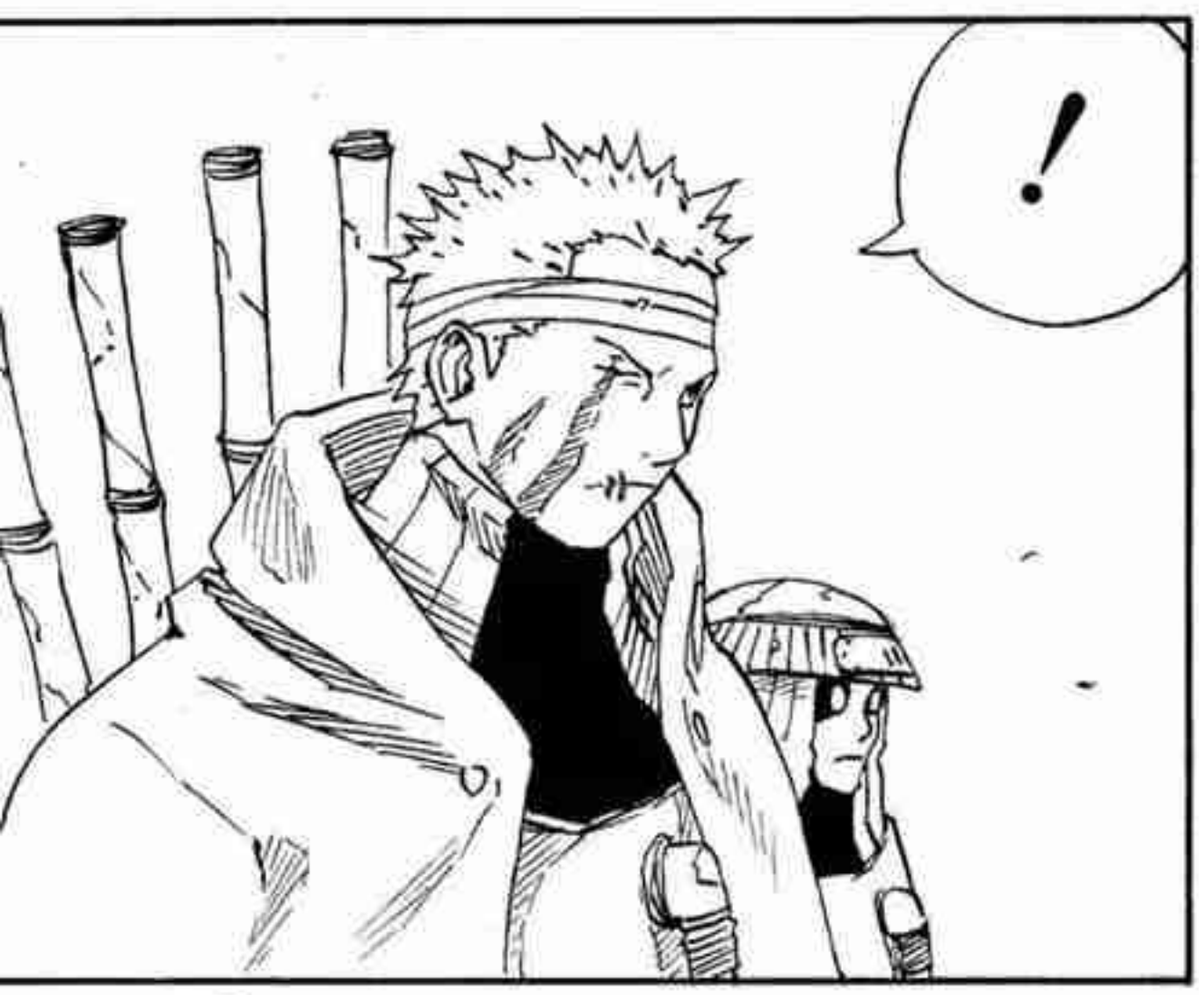
GRRR


...EVEN IF YOU WOW THEM BACK IN THE VILLAGE OF RAIN!
ARE YOU GOING TO FIGHT US... OR TALK US TO DEATH? WE DON'T TAKE ORDERS FROM FOSSILS LIKE YOU...

PREPARE TO MEET YOUR MAKER!

HEY, GAARA! I THOUGHT WE HAD AGREED WE WOULDN'T FIGHT ANYONE UNTIL WE FOUND OUT IF THEY HAD THE SCROLL WE NEED!

MAYBE SOMEONE ELSE HAS ALREADY AMBUSHED THEM... AND NOW THEY DON'T HAVE EITHER!
I CAN'T TELL WHETHER THIS GROUP HAS THE HEAVEN SCROLL... OR THE EARTH!

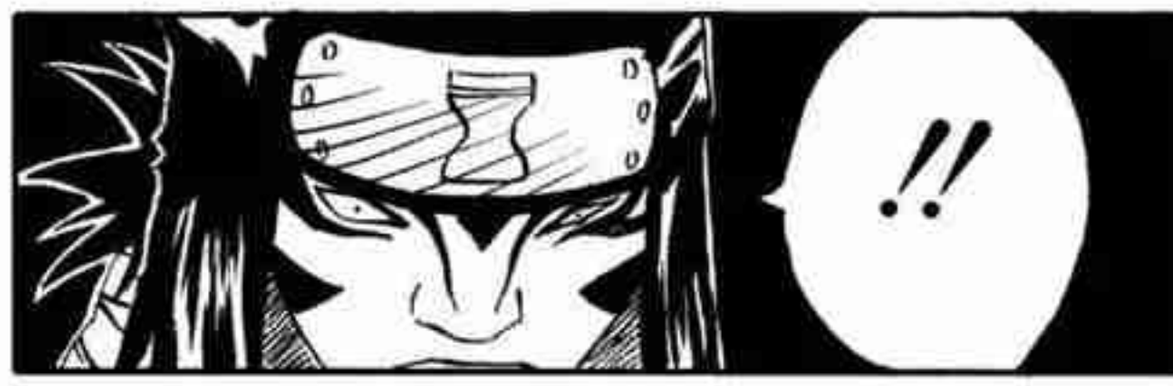

!

I DON'T WANT TO HEAR IT!
WE SHOULD ONLY FIGHT IF THERE'S SOMETHING TO BE GAINED!
THERE'S NO POINT IN ATTACKING IF WE CAN'T PROFIT BY IT...

愛

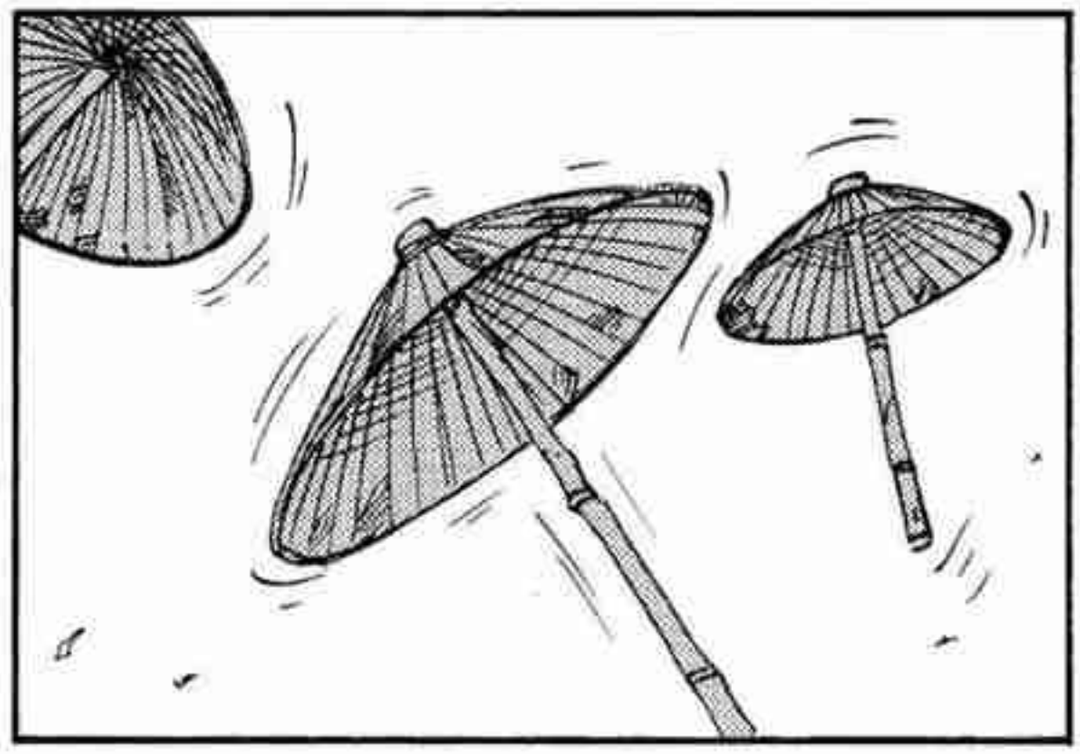
...IS DEAD MEAT!

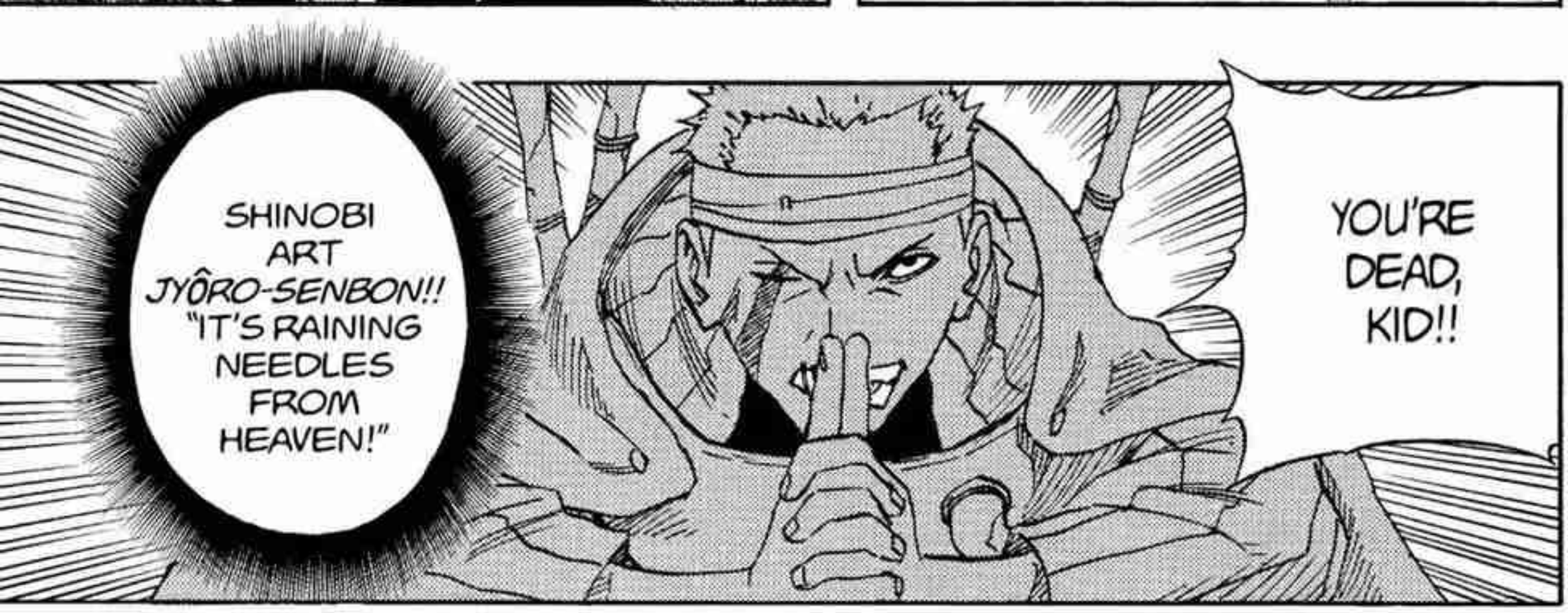
ANYONE WHO CROSSES ME...



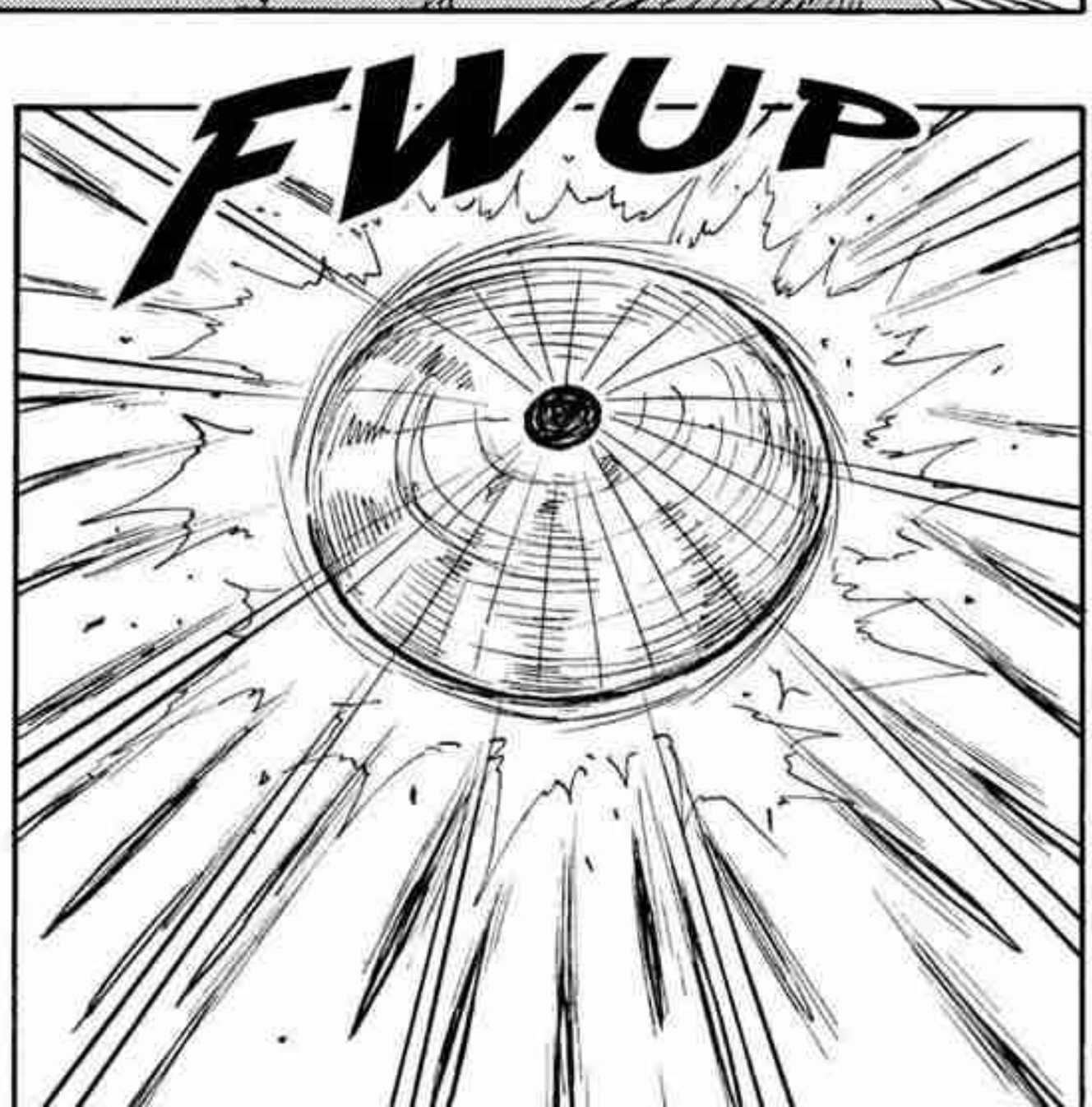
FLUT
FLUT
!!

FWUP




SHINOBI ART JYÔRO-SENBON!! "IT'S RAINING NEEDLES FROM HEAVEN!"
YOU'RE DEAD, KID!!

THE PARASOLS ARE SPRING-LOADED WITH FLYING NEEDLES!!
!!


FWUP

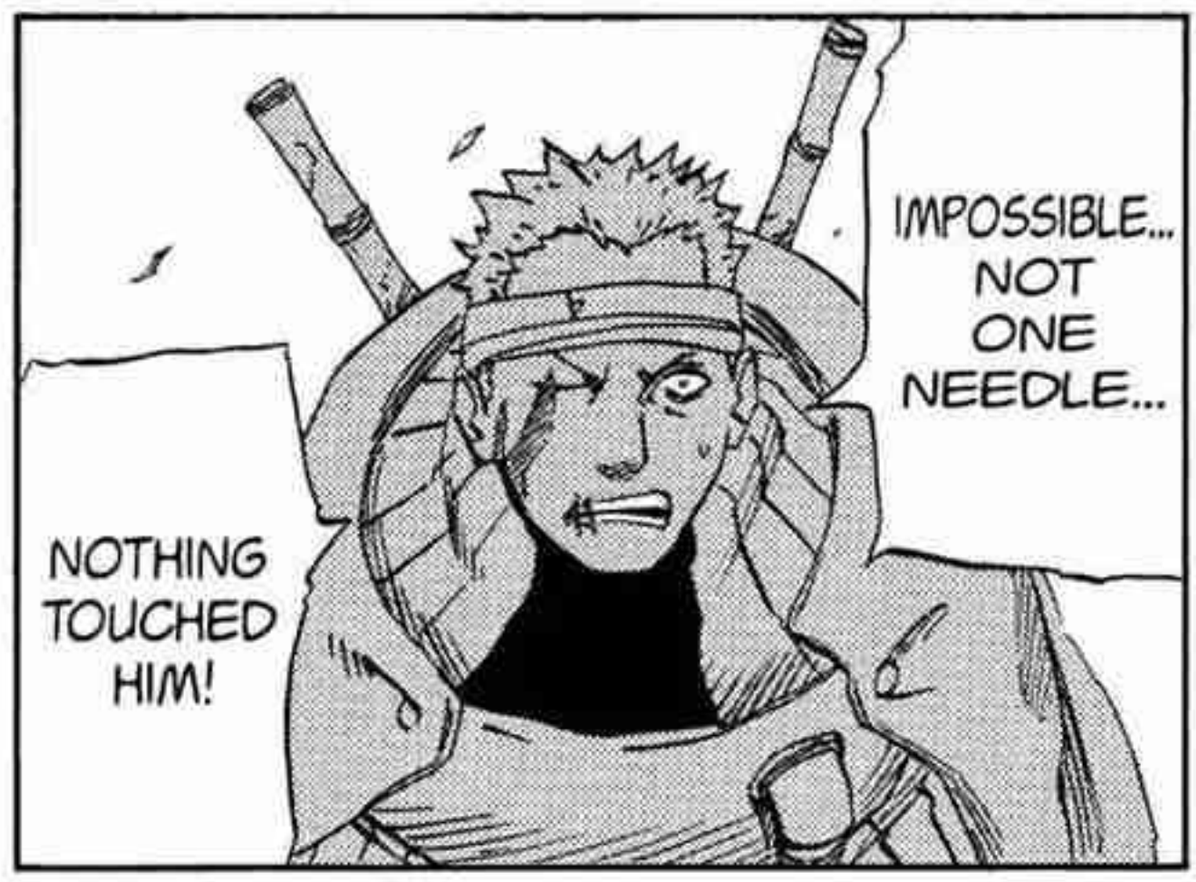
NG

SWOOO
OS

YOU'RE COMPLETELY SURROUNDED. NO GAPS... NO BLIND SPOTS.
ALL 1,000 OF THOSE NEEDLES WILL SWARM IN RESPONSE TO MY CHAKRA, SEEKING YOU OUT LIKE MISSILES THAT HAVE LOCKED ONTO YOUR SIGNATURE!!

YEAH!!

IS THAT ALL YOU'VE GOT?


IMPOSSIBLE... NOT ONE NEEDLE...
NOTHING TOUCHED HIM!

KRUMBLE
KRUMBLE

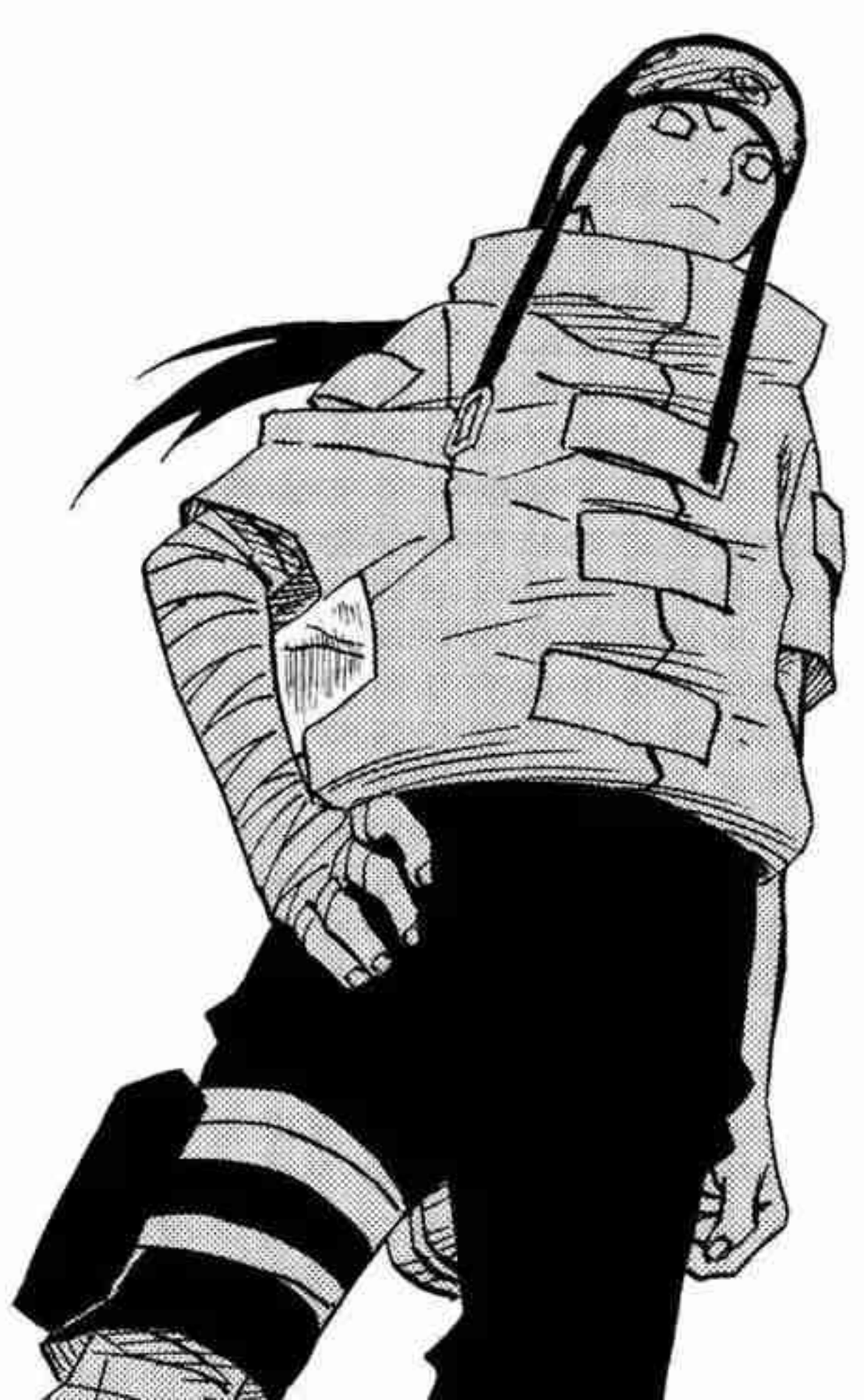
THUK
THUK
THUK
SHLUK

THUK

AGH!!!
FWUP

WELL, IT'S MY TURN...
A DOWN-POUR OF 1,000 NEEDLES, EH?
HEH
...TO RESPOND WITH A DELUGE OF BLOOD.

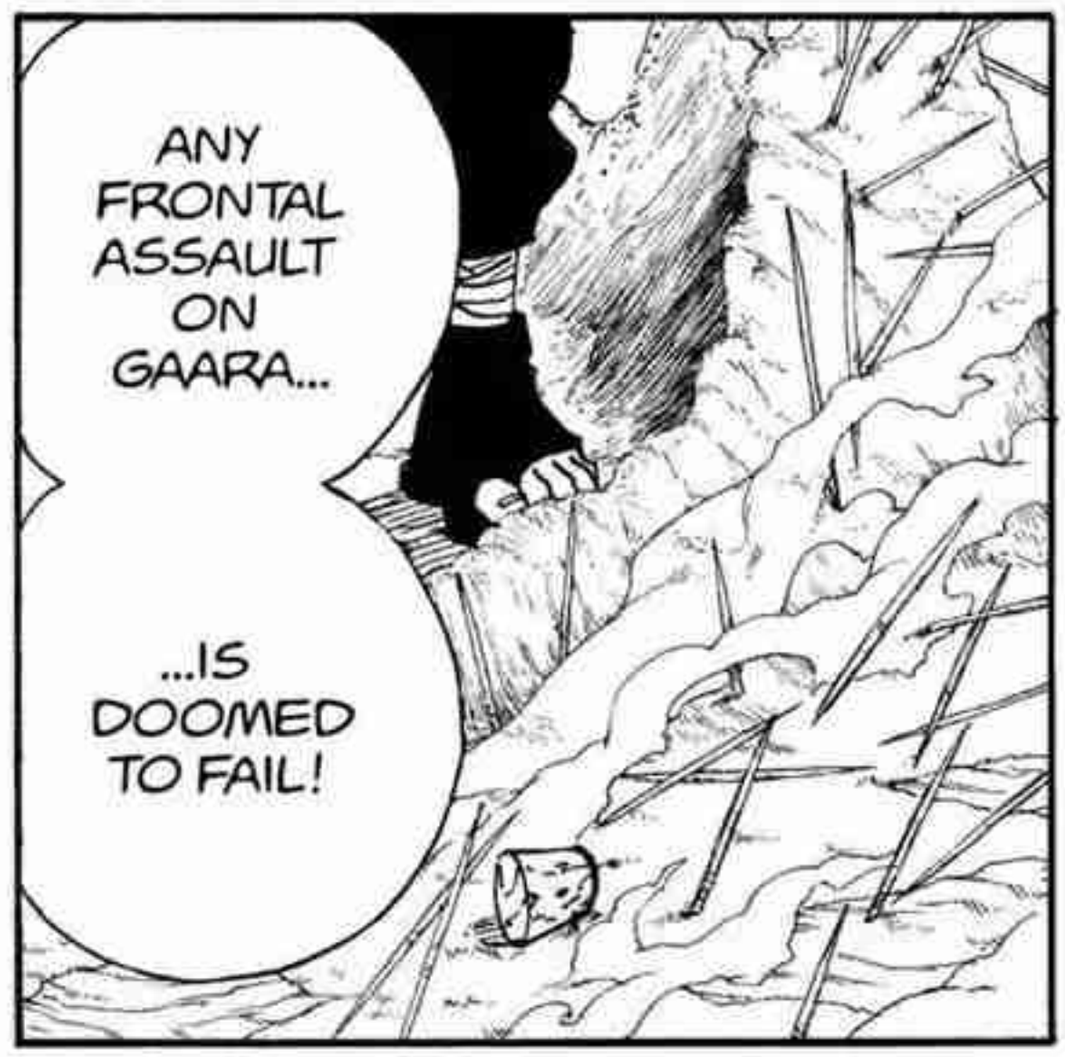
A TRICK LIKE THAT IS USELESS AGAINST GAARA...
IT WAS YOUR BAD LUCK THAT HE'S THE ONE YOU WOUND UP FACING.



Number 59: The Tragedy of the Sand!!

SSS
SS
SSS
IT STINKS OF BLOOD.

THOSE NEEDLES SHOULD BE ABLE TO PIERCE EVEN A FIVE-MILLIMETER THICKNESS OF TEMPERED STEEL!
N-NO... WAY...


ANY FRONTAL ASSAULT ON GAARA...
...IS DOOMED TO FAIL!

愛
YOU'RE NOT GOOD ENOUGH TO TOUCH OUR GAARA.

OHH...
BLAST!

TAK
SHUT UP, YOU--!!!

FINE. IT'S YOUR FUNERAL.
FW
UP

FLIP
SABAKUKYÛ! THE COFFIN OF CRUSHING SAND!

SSUSSH
SQUIRM
SSSSSSSSSS

SUSSSH
SUSSSH

!!
GRAB

SWUP

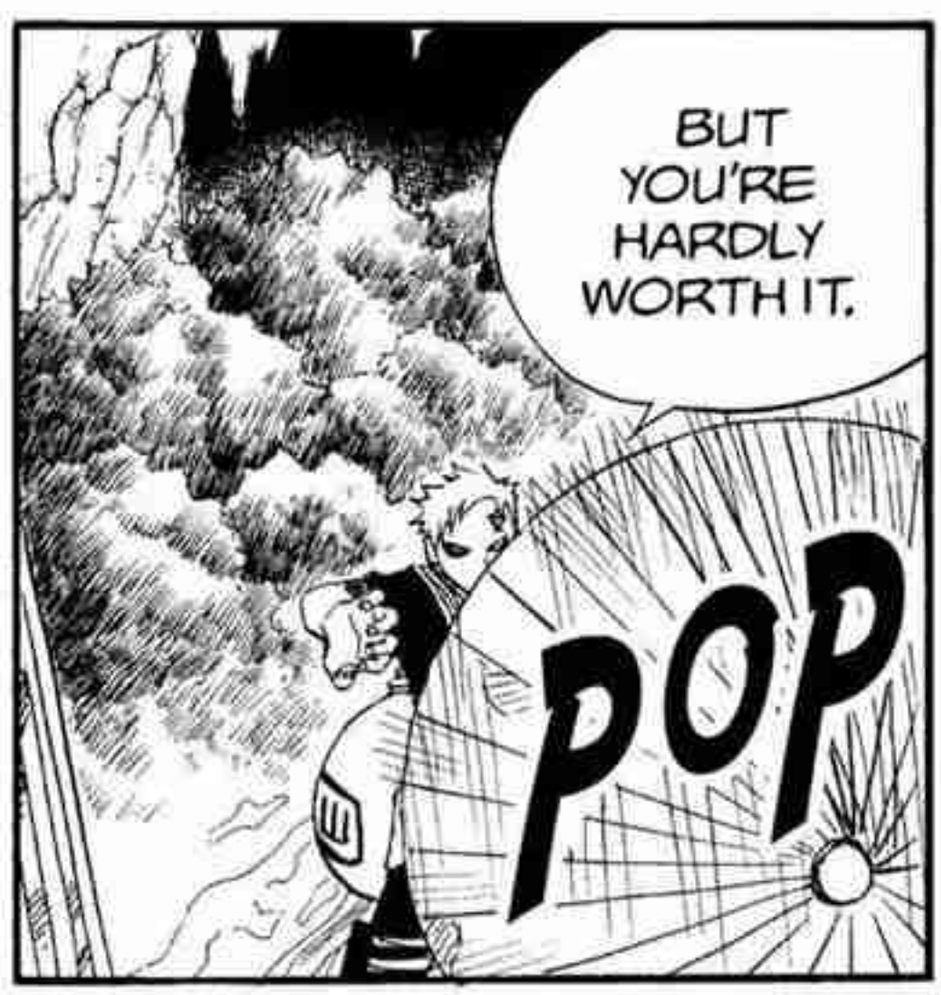
...I CAN'T MOVE...

GUHK

UHN-!

AS YOU SEE, GAARA HAS TOTAL MASTERY...
...OVER THE SAND ON THE GROUND... AND IN THE AIR AS WELL..

THUNK
THUNK


BUT YOU'RE HARDLY WORTH IT.
POP

IF YOU DON'T STOP YAPPING, I'LL SEAL YOUR LIPS... AND CUT OFF YOUR AIR.
SHHHF

GUHK
I CAN FREE MYSELF... E-EASILY... AUGH!!

SSSSSSH

!!

!!

YANK

SSSSH

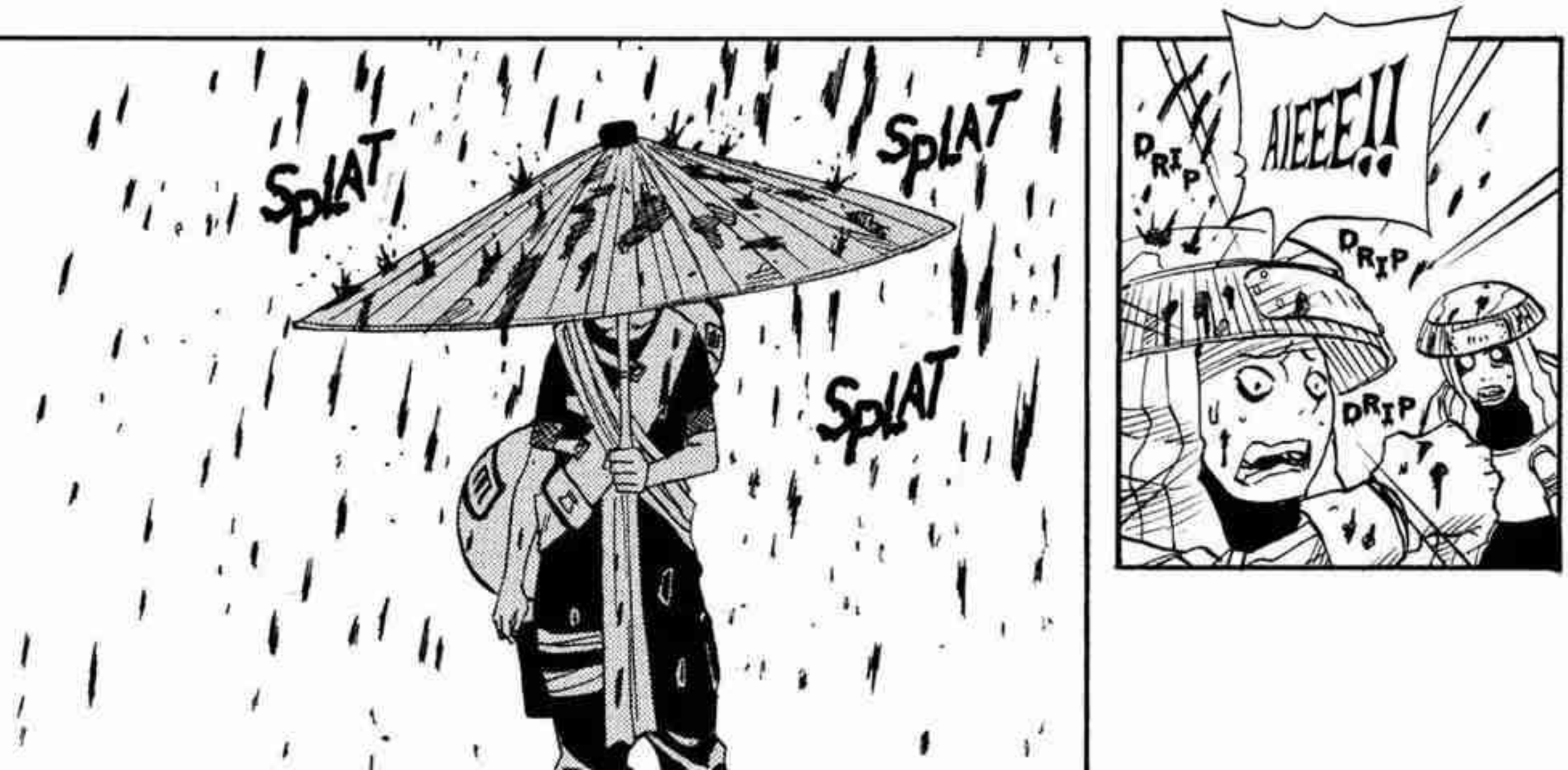
TWITCH

愛

PUNCH

SABAKUSÔSÔ!

IMPLODING SAND FUNERAL!



I USED FAR MORE FORCE THAN WAS NECESSARY TO ENSURE THAT.

IT'S QUICK... AND PAINLESS.

PLIT

...BESTOWING EVER-GREATER POWER UPON THE DEMON GOD.

BITTER, CRIMSON TEARS FLOW FROM LIFE-LESS EYES AND MINGLE WITH THE ENDLESS SANDS...

FLIP

PLEASE... JUST LET US GO!

HERE... TAKE THE SCROLL...

SHIVER

SHIVER

SHOVE

KRIK

KRIK

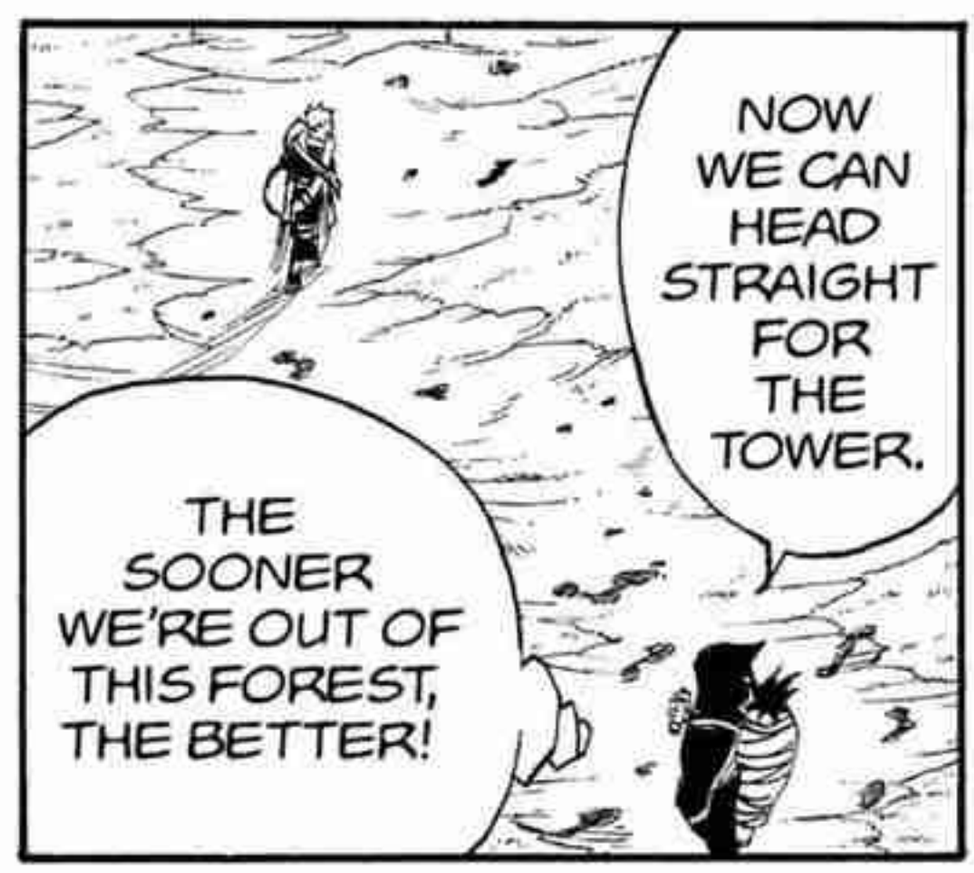
NOOOO!!
AIEE!!
SSSSSSSSH
SHMM
CLENCH
BYE-BYE!

TAK

TAK
LUCKY US... WE NEEDED THE HEAVEN SCROLL.

IF THEY SPOT US, WE'RE DEAD MEAT!!
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE... WHILE WE STILL CAN!
TOK

NOT YET!


NOW WE CAN HEAD STRAIGHT FOR THE TOWER.
THE SOONER WE'RE OUT OF THIS FOREST, THE BETTER!

...I STILL HAVEN'T BEEN SATED.
NO...

!

SHUDDER

愛

COME ON, GAARA... LET'S GO.

AW, MAN! DOES HE KNOW WE'RE HERE?!

ONE SET OF SCROLLS IS ALL WE NEED. WE'RE DONE.
GAARA! MAYBE YOU'LL BE FINE, BUT...
...TEMARI AND I CAN'T AFFORD TO TAKE CHANCES!
TAK

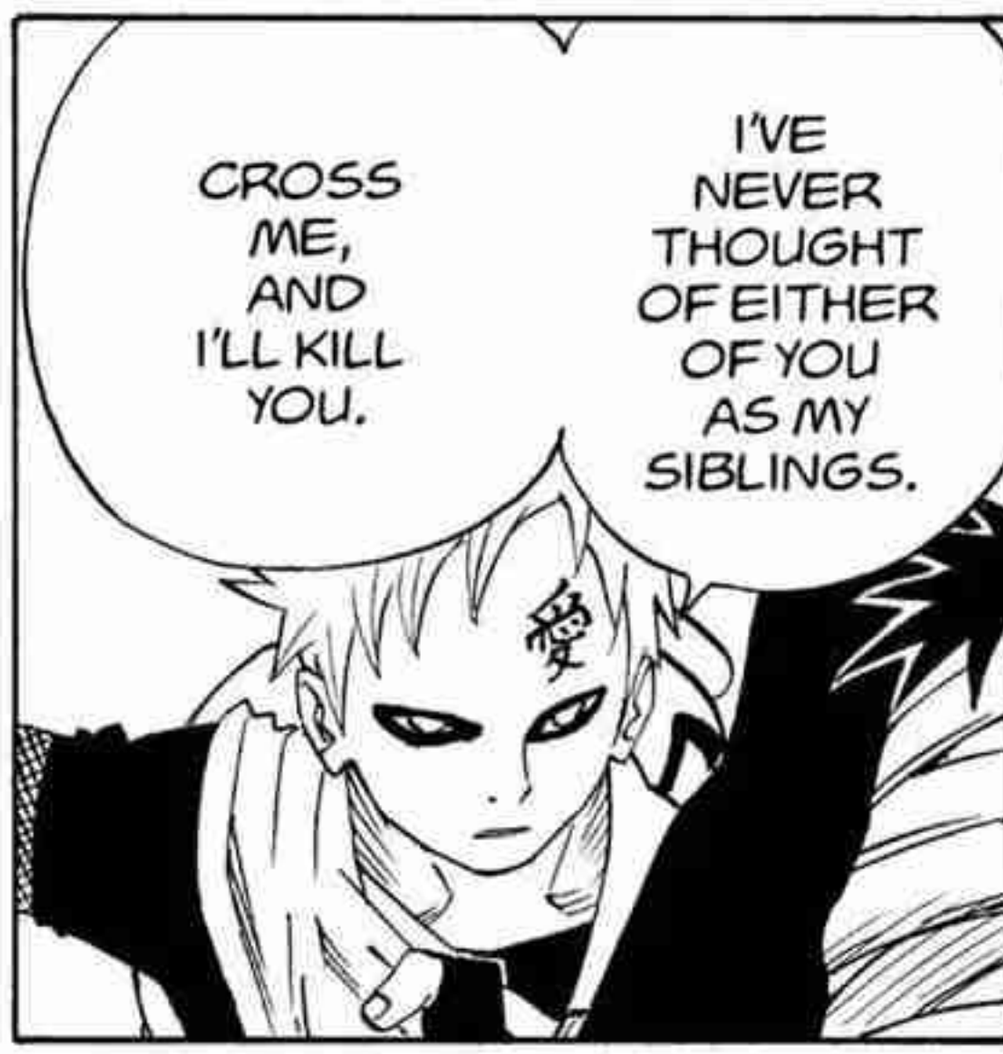
COWARD!
ARE YOU FRIGHT-ENED...?

SQUINT

FLINCH

...

SSS SS
FOOL... I DON'T TAKE ORDERS FROM YOU.

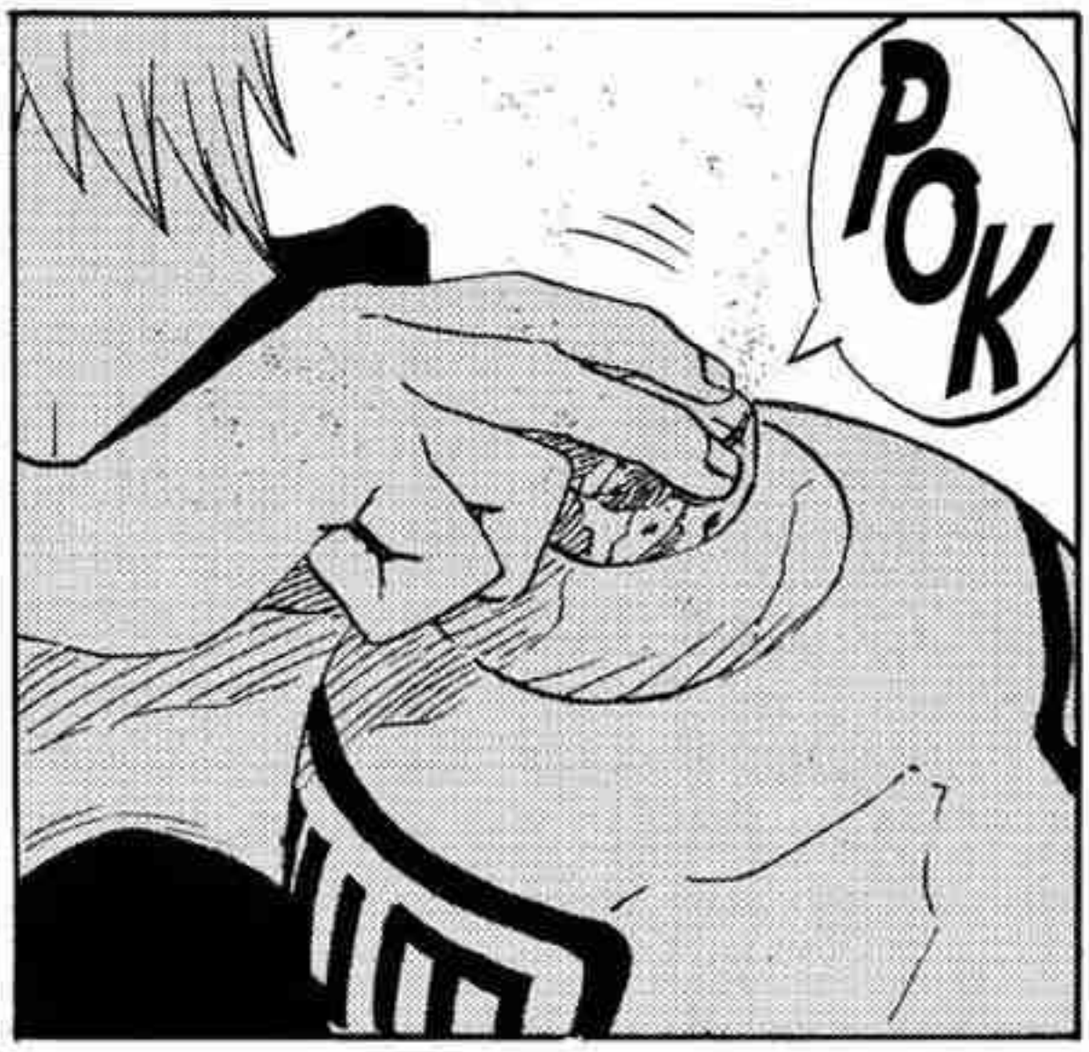

CROSS ME, AND I'LL KILL YOU.
I'VE NEVER THOUGHT OF EITHER OF YOU AS MY SIBLINGS.

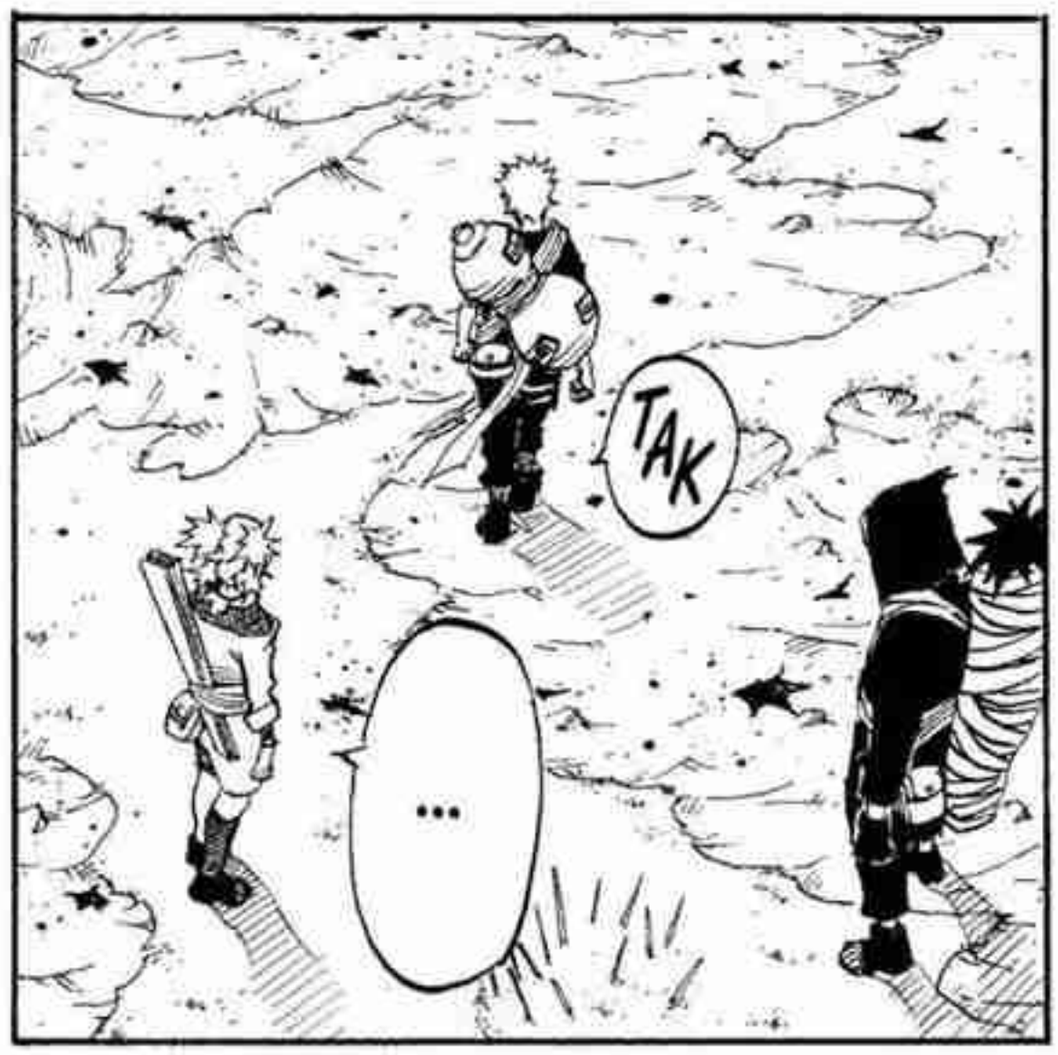
!
...LISTEN TO WHAT YOUR BIG BROTHER TELLS YOU!
THAT'S ENOUGH!
JUST FOR ONCE, GAARA...
YANK

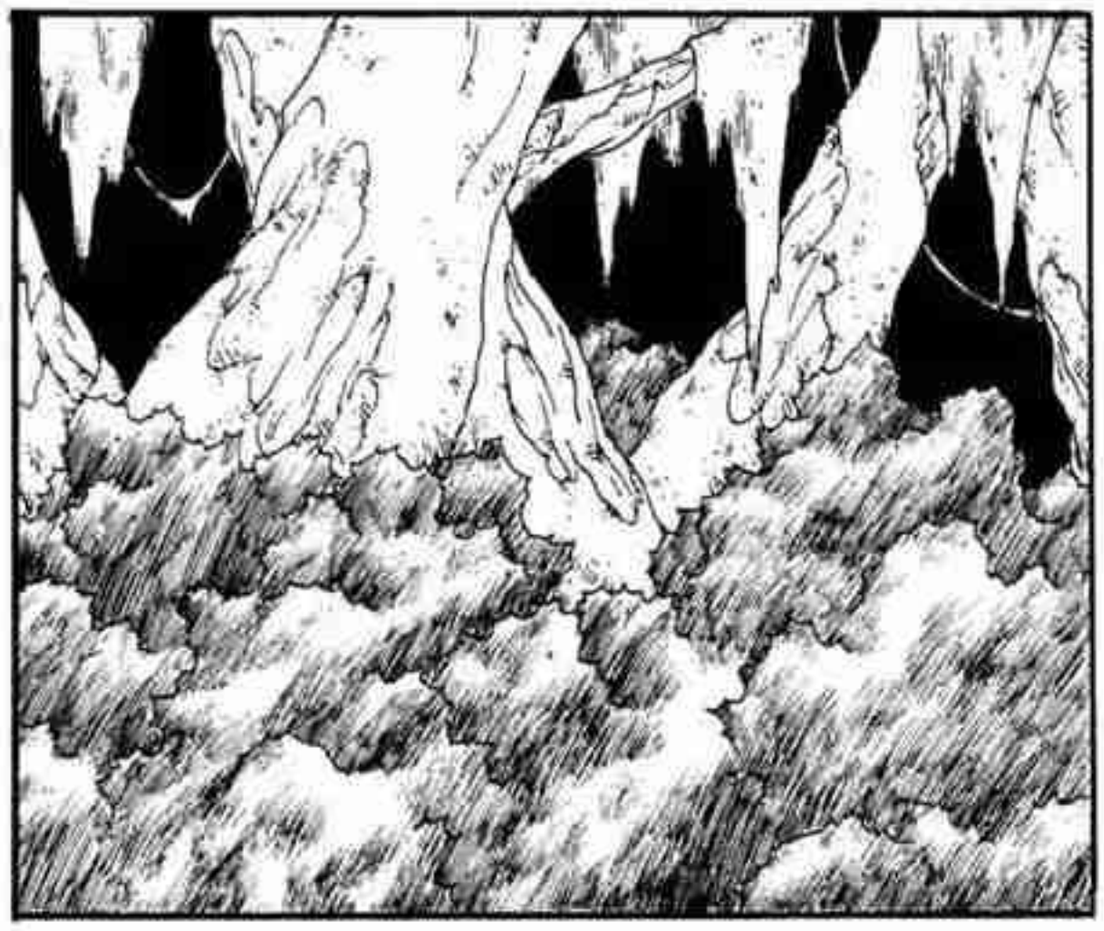
PLEASE... DON'T BE SO CRUEL.
AREN'T I LIKE A SISTER TO YOU? I'M BEGGING...
C-COME ON, GAARA!
SWAT
!!
S!! SSSSS
S
GAARA!
SSSHH

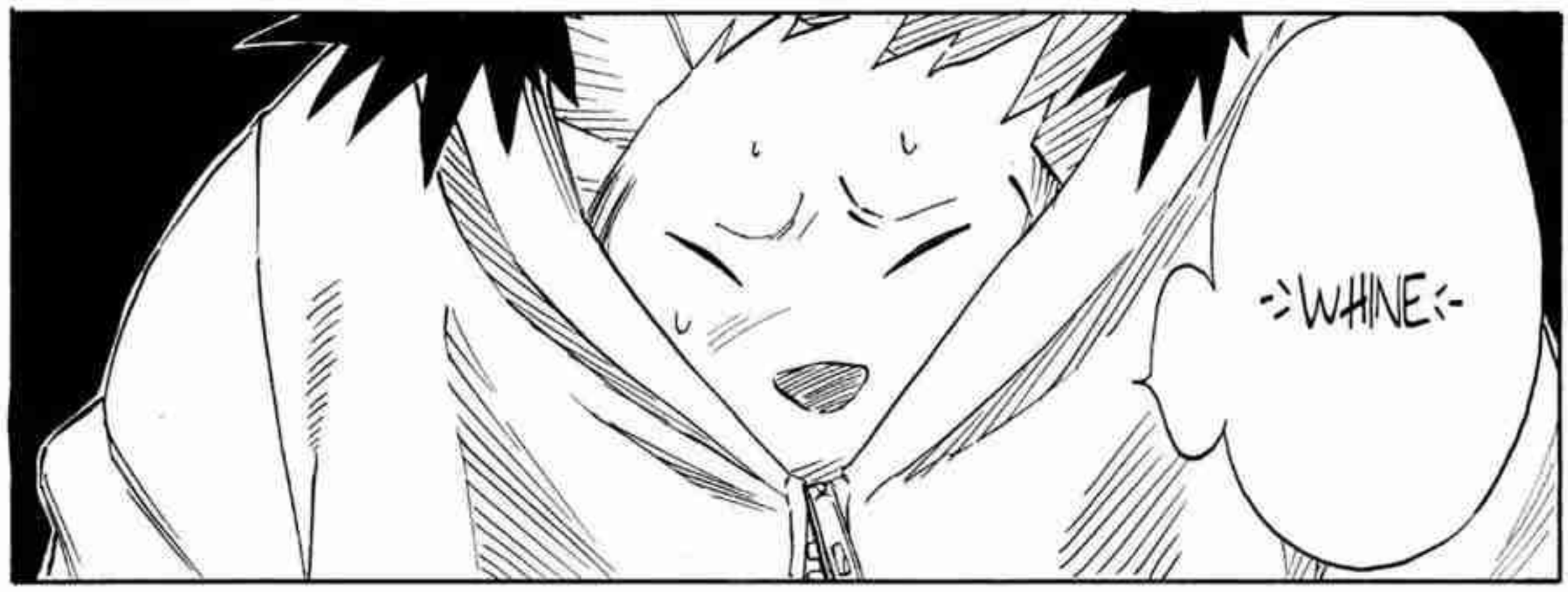
OKAY... FINE.

SHFF SHFFF








-:WHINE:-

HUF
HUF
WH-WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
WHOA...
NO WONDER AKAMARU WAS SO UPSET... YOU WERE TRYING TO WARN US, EH, BOY?

...HE'S DEADLY.
YEAH... THAT KID FROM SUNAGAKURE...
...WHATEVER HIS STORY IS...

...THAT THE BIG GUY WAS *IN DANGER*...NOT *DANGEROUS!* HE MEANT THE KID FROM SAND WAS GOING TO KILL HIM!
AKAMARU WAS TRYING TO TELL US...

THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI
MY PERSONAL HISTORY, PART THREE: PRIMARY SCHOOL

AS AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLER, I SPENT A LOT OF TIME EVERY DAY DOODLING IN MY "ANYTHING GOES" SKETCHBOOK. EVEN WHEN I WAS OUT ON THE PLAY-GROUND PLAYING TAG, I ALWAYS HID REALLY WELL IN HOPES THAT WHOEVER WAS "IT" WOULDN'T FIND ME AND SAT QUIETLY, DRAWING DORAEMON IN THE DIRT.

THEN ONE SUCH DAY, I SAW AN AMAZING TV SHOW. "WHAT IN THE WORLD IS IT?" I WONDERED. "IT'S SO COOL, AND THE ARTWORK IS AWESOME." THE SHOW WAS... "MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM." AFTER THAT, MY SKETCHBOOK WAS ALWAYS CRAMMED WITH DRAWINGS OF ROBOTS CALLED MOBILE SUITS. ZAKU, GOUF, DOM, GM, DOZLE ZABI... I FEVERISHLY DREW ALL KINDS OF GUNDAM CHARACTERS.

THEN ON ANOTHER DAY, I SAW ANOTHER INCREDIBLE TV SHOW AND THOUGHT, "W-WOW! THE ART IS AMAZING! AND IT HAS SUCH STYLE!!" THE PROGRAM WAS "DR SLUMP: ARALE-CHAN." FROM THAT POINT ON, ALL I WANTED TO DRAW WAS ARALE-CHAN. I EVEN ENTERED A CRAYON SKETCH OF ARALE-CHAN INTO AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ART EXHIBITION. I CAN STILL REMEMBER MY MOTHER SAYING, "IF THIS ARALE-CHAN IS A GIRL, THEN YOU HAVE TO PUT LIPSTICK ON HER," AND JUST LIKE THAT, SHE ADDED RED LIPSTICK TO MY DRAWING OF ARALE-CHAN. I ALSO REMEMBER CLEARLY THAT THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE THAT I COMPLETELY LOST MY TEMPER.

Number 60: The Last Chance...!!

MEANWHILE, NARUTO AND HIS TEAM ARE...

SPLASH

DOSH

COWABUNGA!

ART OF THE SHADOW DOPPELGANGER!!

YAAAHI

SPLASH-SPLASH

SPLASH SPLASH

GLUB BLUB GLUB BLUB!!

GLUG GLUG

FW HIP

GASP
GASP
HUF
PUF
PUF
HUF
HUF
PUF

THUNK
GLUK

THIS ISN'T EXACTLY EASY, YA KNOW!
GRRRR
LET'S DO IT THREE MORE TIMES. C'MON, STUPID.
SPLASH!
SO... LET'S SWAP JOBS! YOU DIVE!!

THREE FISH WON'T LAST US LONG. I WANT TO PRESERVE SOME FOR LATER.
GO UNDER AND FLAIL AROUND AGAIN!!
!

HEY, WAIT A MINUTE!!
?
...ALL RIGHT. THREE FISH WILL DO FOR NOW.
STAB

SASUKE!! I'VE FINISHED SETTING UP THE STICKS AND KINDLING! COULD YOU PLEASE IGNITE IT WITH YOUR GÔKAKYÛ FIREBALL?!
TAK

THE SECOND EXAM STARTED FOUR DAYS AGO... RIGHT?

YEAH...

SIZZLE

CRACKLE

OH! HUNGRY, I'M HUNGRY! HURRY UP AND BE READY TO GET IN MY TUMMY!

WHICH MEANS...

A LOT OF TEAMS MUST HAVE FINISHED BY NOW.

...SO IT WILL BE OVER IN LESS THAN 26 HOURS.

AND IT BEGAN AT AROUND 2:30 P.M....

THAT LOOKS LIKE THE BIGGEST LITTLE FISHIE, RIGHT THERE!!

...PEOPLE WILL BE GETTING DESPERATE.

RATTLE

Number 60: The Last Chance...!!

ANNOUNCING THE RESULTS OF OUR

TOTAL NUMBER OF VOTES:
72,733 VOTES!!!*

THANKS TO EVERYONE FOR
ALL THOSE VOTES!!!!

11TH: MITARASHI ANKO	332 VOTES
12TH: HYUGA NEJI	288 VOTES
13TH: YUHI KURENAI	217 VOTES
14TH: MASTER GAI	216 VOTES
15TH: OROCHIMARU	199 VOTES
16TH: MORINO IBIKI	174 VOTES
17TH: SARUTOBI ASUMA	165 VOTES
18TH: KISHIMOTO MASASHI	157 VOTES
19TH: INARI	156 VOTES
20TH: KONOHAMARU	143 VOTES
21ST: INUZUKA KIBA	135 VOTES
22ND: KABUTO	110 VOTES
23RD: OTONIN SOUND NINJA	107 VOTES
24TH: TENTEN	83 VOTES
25TH: NINE-TAILED FOX	72 VOTES
26TH: TEMARI	71 VOTES
27TH: NARA SHIKAMARU	66 VOTES
28TH: KANKURO	62 VOTES
29TH: EBISU	55 VOTES
30TH: YAMANAKA INO	53 VOTES

*THESE ARE THE RESULTS OF A CHARACTER POPULARITY POLL CONDUCTED IN JAPAN. VOTE FOR YOUR FAVORITE CHARACTER BY WRITING TO:

NARUTO CHARACTER POLL
SHONEN JUMP
C/O VIZ, LLC
P.O. BOX 77010
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94107

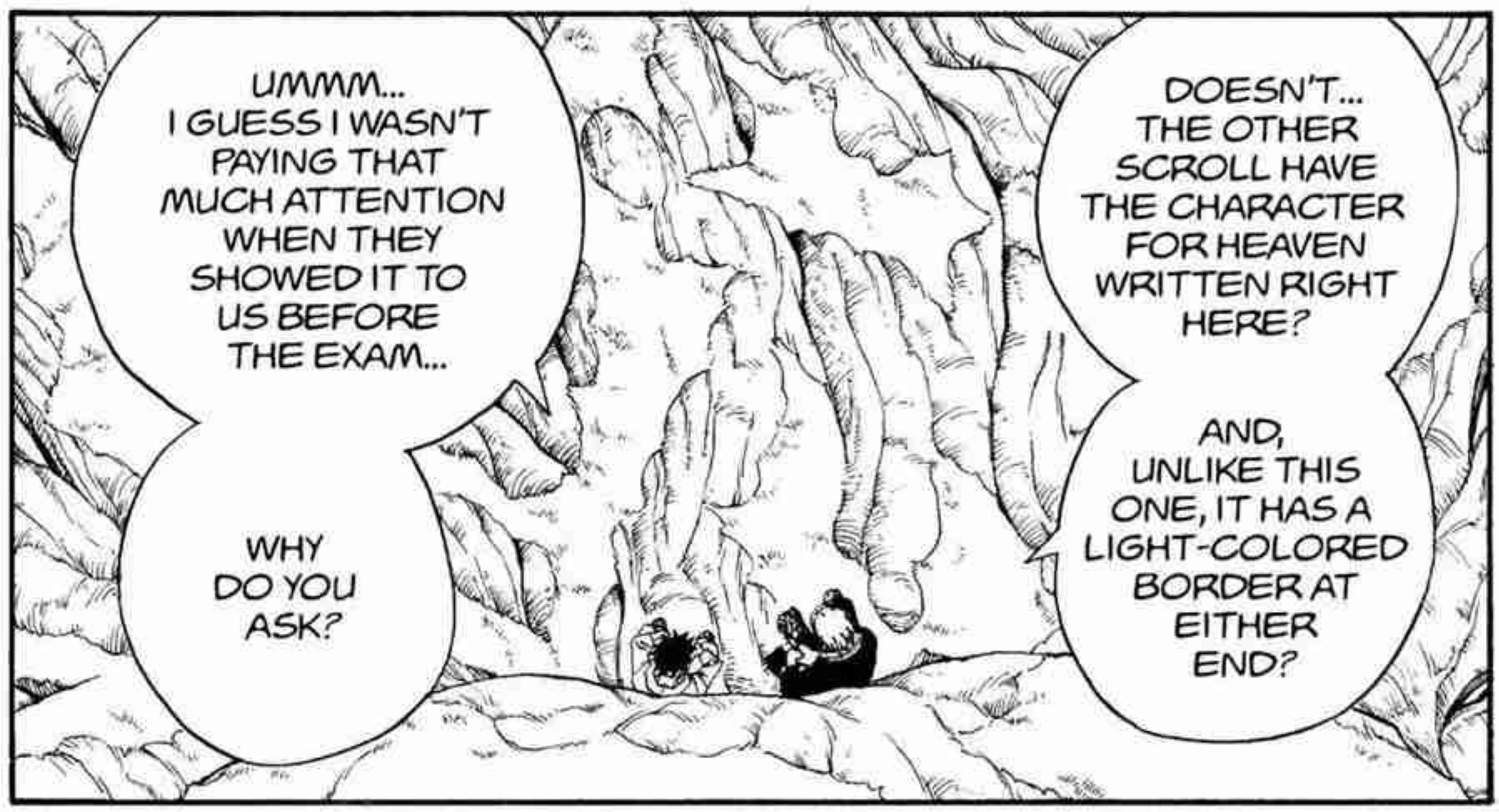
...SO ALMOST EVERYONE'S DONE.
YEAH... IT'S ALREADY THE MIDDLE OF THE FOURTH DAY...
HUF
PUF

THERE'S NOT MUCH POINT IN HUNTING... I DOUBT THERE'S ANYONE LEFT WITH WHAT WE NEED... OR WITH WEAK ENOUGH DEFENSES TO LET US NAB IT.
HUF
PUF
PUF
HUF
WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

I'LL FIND SOMETHING TO EAT.
YOU TWO GET SOME REST...
...THANKS...
TAK

IN ANY CASE...
IT'S RIGHT AROUND LUNCH-TIME.

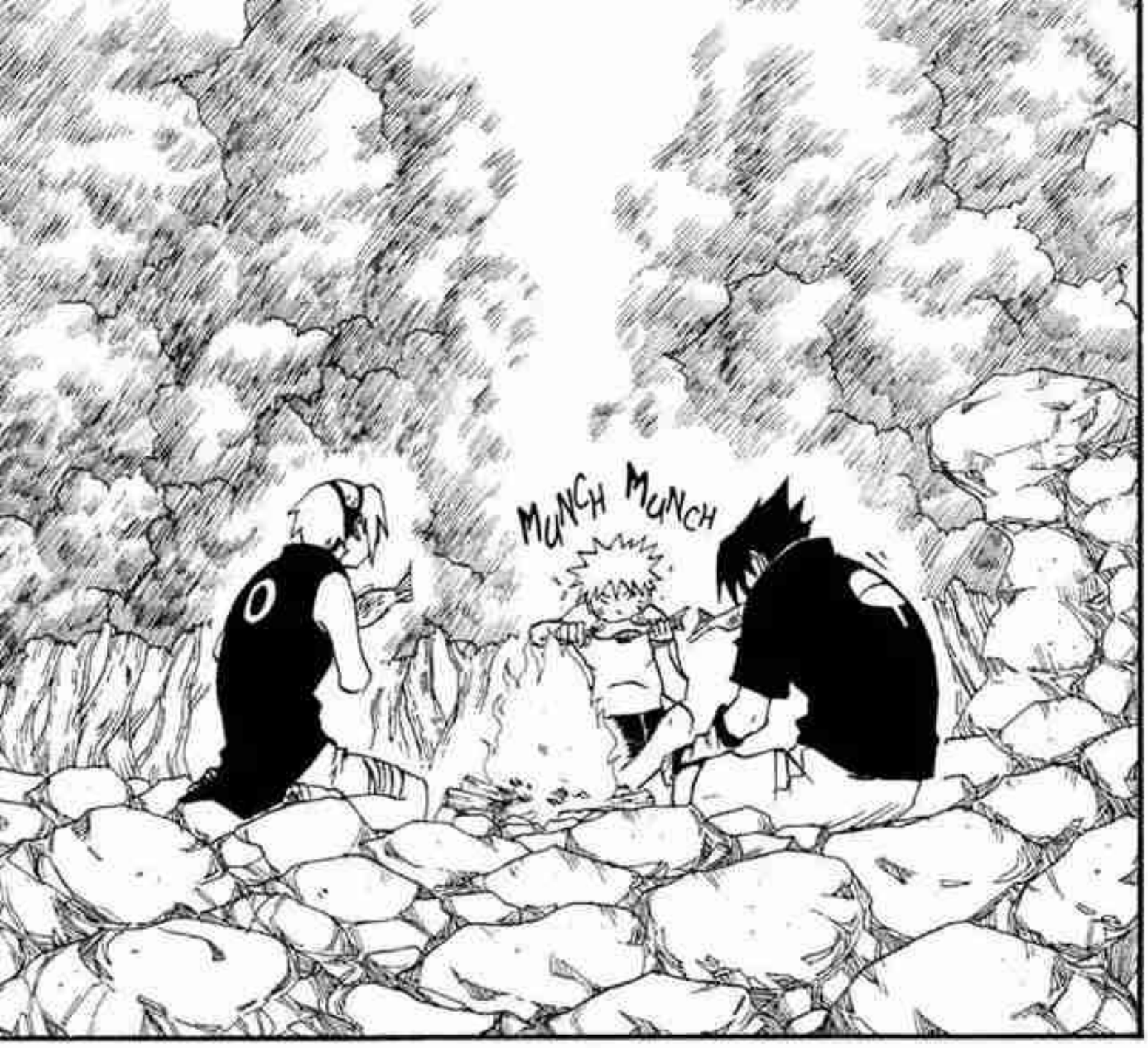
HEY...
HM?

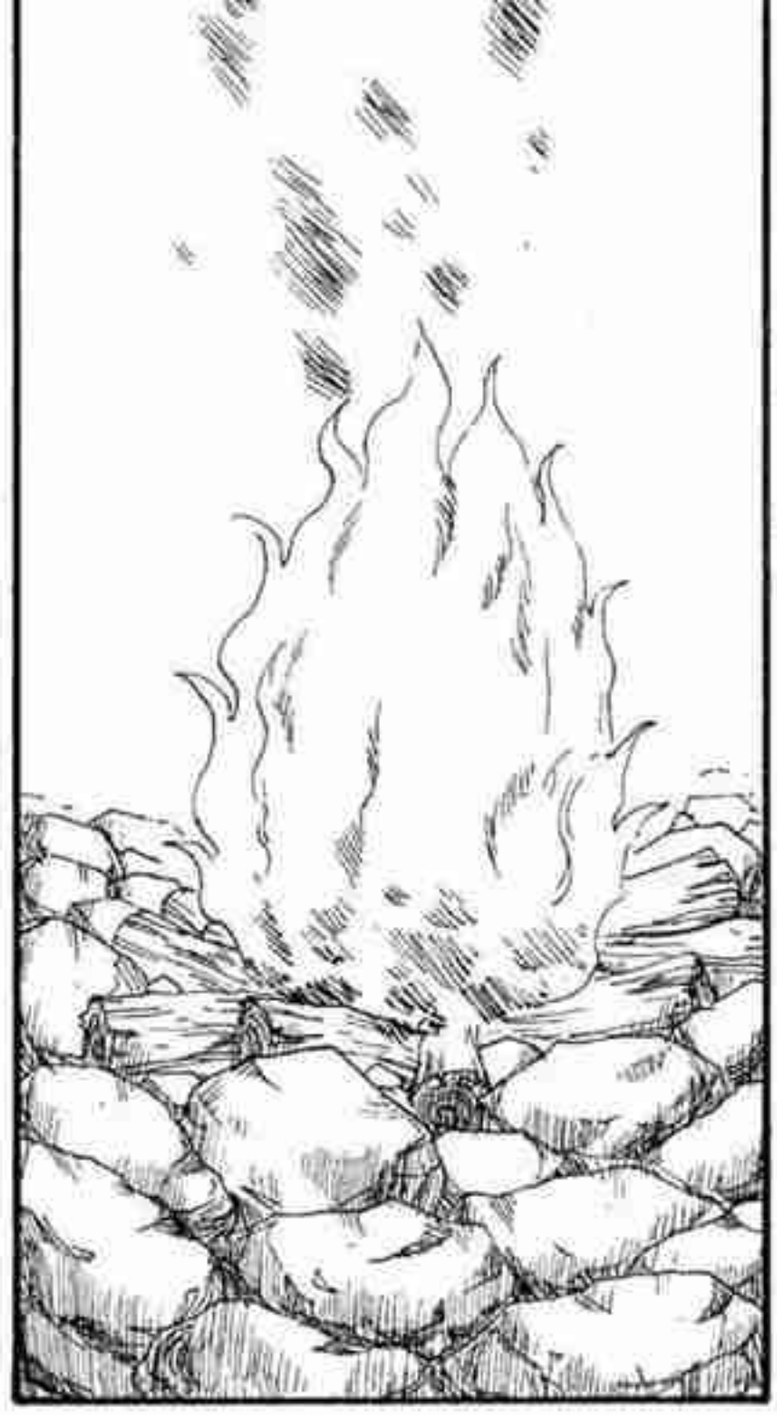

UMMM... I GUESS I WASN'T PAYING THAT MUCH ATTENTION WHEN THEY SHOWED IT TO US BEFORE THE EXAM...
WHY DO YOU ASK?
DOESN'T... THE OTHER SCROLL HAVE THE CHARACTER FOR HEAVEN WRITTEN RIGHT HERE?
AND, UNLIKE THIS ONE, IT HAS A LIGHT-COLORED BORDER AT EITHER END?

HEH

D-DON'T TELL ME... YOU...?!

GLARE
!


MUNCH MUNCH



...THERE MIGHT NOT BE ANY MORE HEAVEN SCROLLS LEFT.
I'M WORRIED THAT...

...

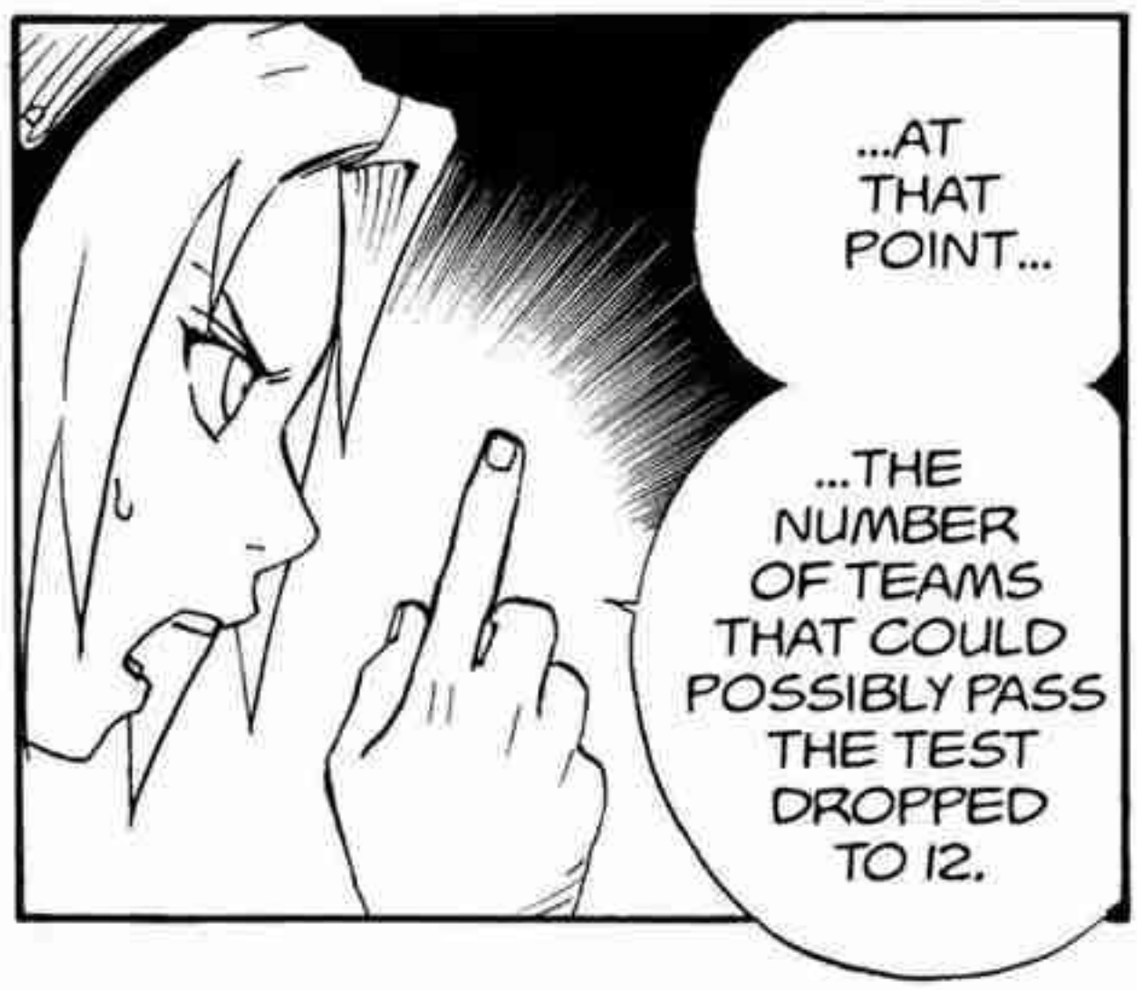
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, SAKURA?
...

!
...

THAT'S 80 PERCENT OF THE TEST TIME.
WELL, THE SECOND EXAM IS ONLY DUE TO LAST FIVE DAYS... AND FOUR DAYS HAVE ALREADY ELAPSED.

...THAT OROCHIMARU GUY WHO ATTACKED US...
AND... THAT WAS BEFORE...
...BURNED OUR HEAVEN SCROLL.

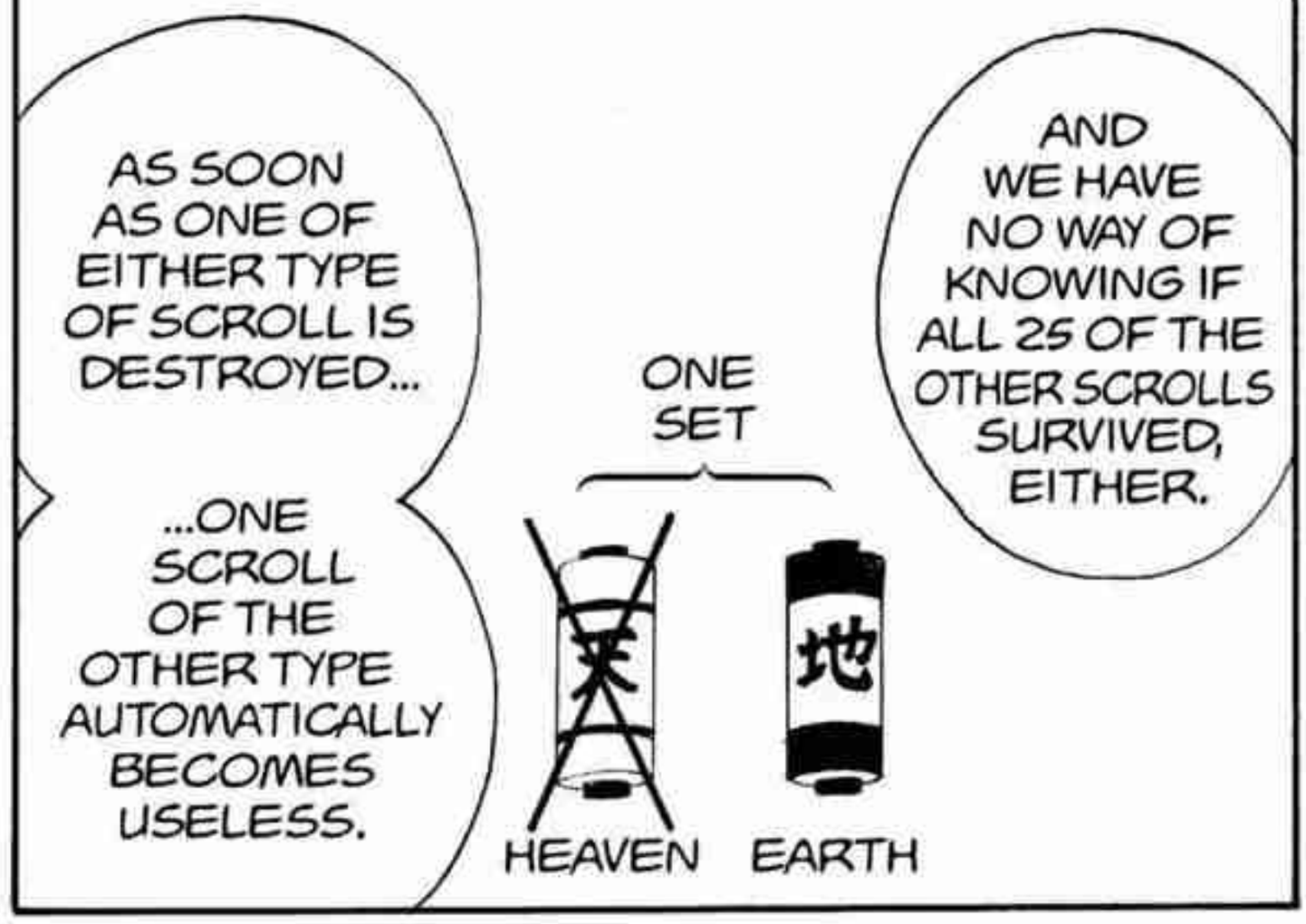
SINCE YOU NEED BOTH SCROLLS TO PASS, A MAXIMUM OF 13 TEAMS WILL SUCCEED.
THERE ARE 26 TEAMS OF THREE COMPETING...
AND ONLY 13 OF EACH SCROLL, HEAVEN OR EARTH.
?


...AT THAT POINT...
...THE NUMBER OF TEAMS THAT COULD POSSIBLY PASS THE TEST DROPPED TO 12.

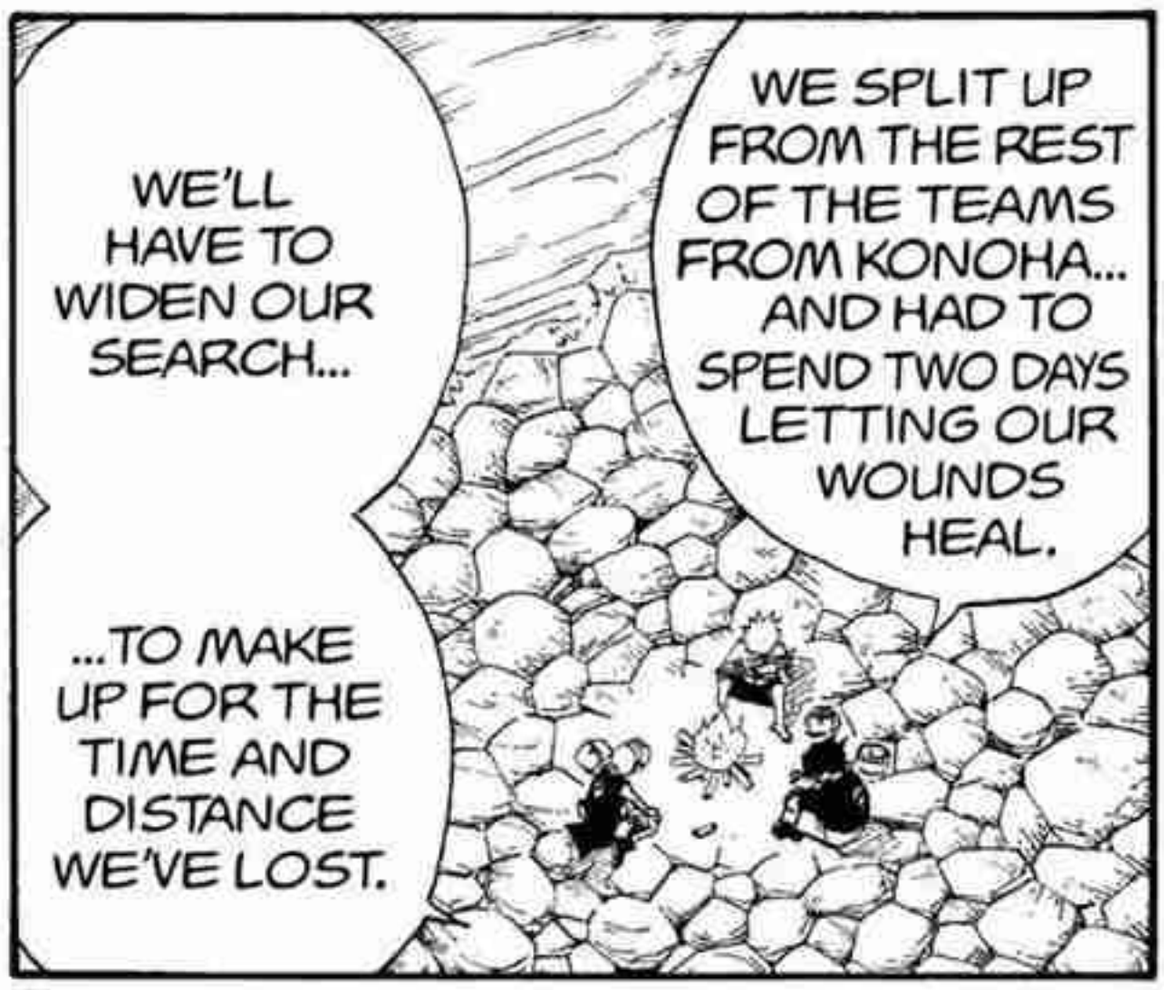
?

WHICH MEANS THAT...
...

READ THIS WAY


AS SOON AS ONE OF EITHER TYPE OF SCROLL IS DESTROYED...
...ONE SCROLL OF THE OTHER TYPE AUTOMATICALLY BECOMES USELESS.
ONE SET
天
地
HEAVEN
EARTH
AND WE HAVE NO WAY OF KNOWING IF ALL 25 OF THE OTHER SCROLLS SURVIVED, EITHER.

THE NEXT ENEMY WE MEET...


WE'LL HAVE TO WIDEN OUR SEARCH...
...TO MAKE UP FOR THE TIME AND DISTANCE WE'VE LOST.
WE SPLIT UP FROM THE REST OF THE TEAMS FROM KONOHA... AND HAD TO SPEND TWO DAYS LETTING OUR WOUNDS HEAL.

...

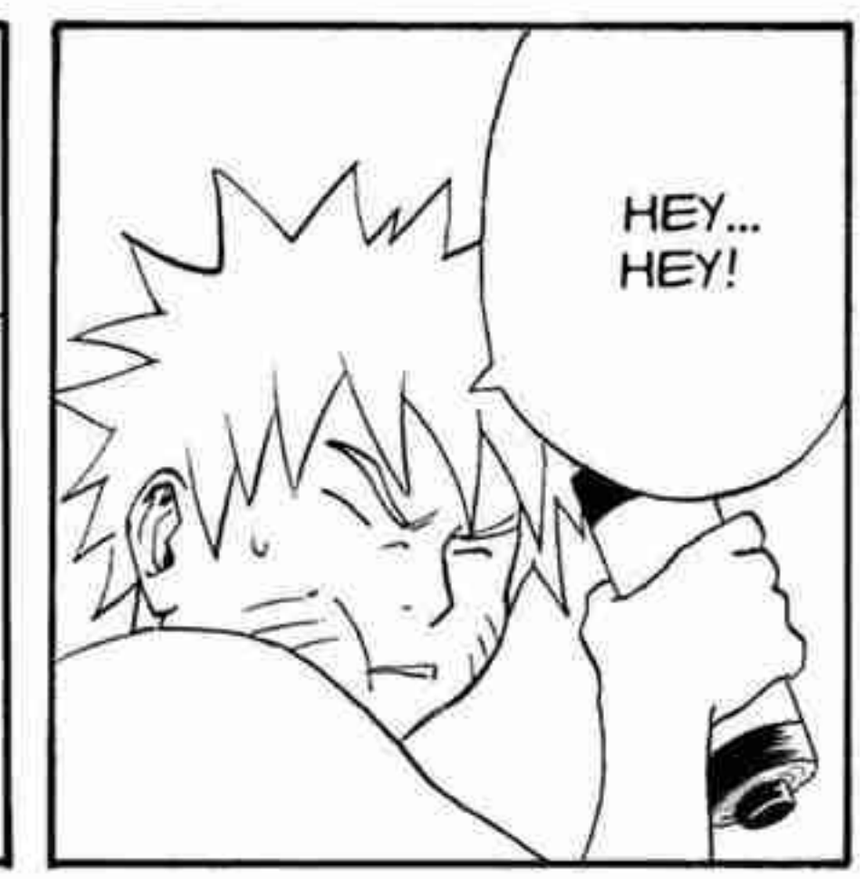
...OUR LAST CHANCE!!
...COULD BE...

I'M GOING TO GO GET SOME WATER...
TAK

...

SKF

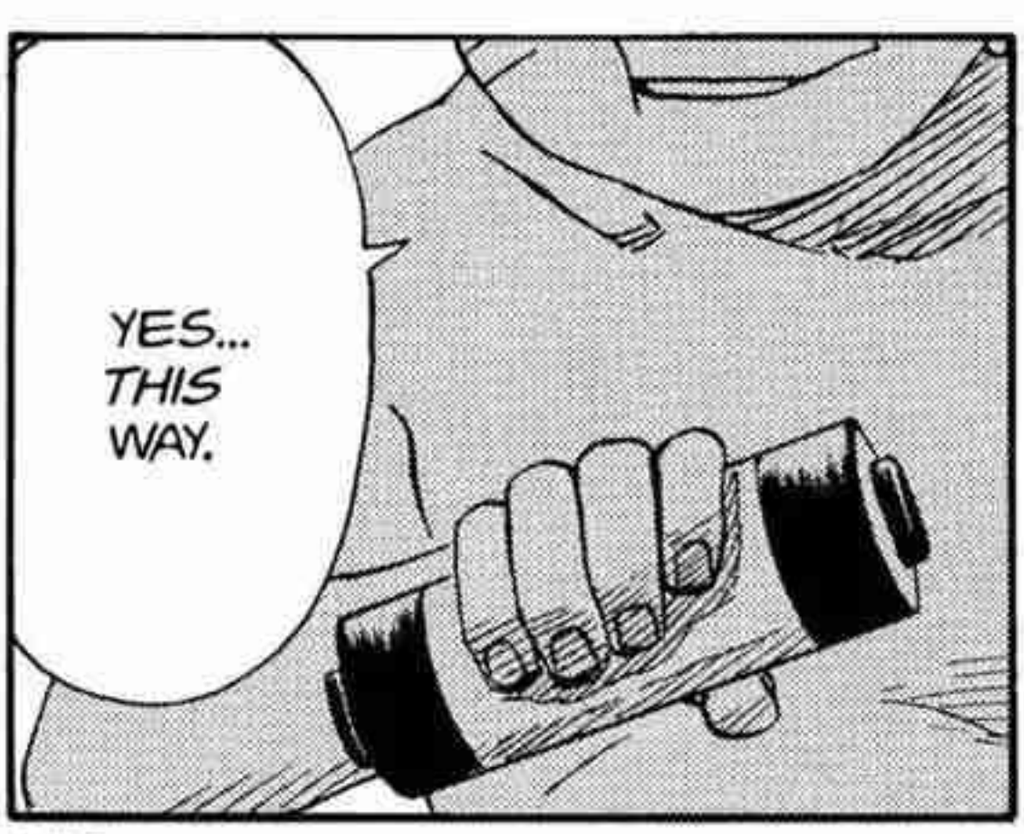
!


HEY... HEY!

GRAB

AND WE WON'T EVEN HAVE TO THROW A PUNCH!

THERE'S ANOTHER WAY TO GET A HEAVEN SCROLL!



NINJUTSU MANUALS, RECIPES FOR POISONS, BLANK SCROLLS FOR TAKING NOTES...

A FEW BRUSH STROKES HERE, SOME DECORATION THERE, AND ONE OF THESE CAN PASS FOR A HEAVEN SCROLL IN NO TIME!

IF IT'S SCROLLS THEY WANT, I GOT A MILLION OF 'EM.

BUT HE IS SUCH AN INNOCENT... AND SO DUMB!

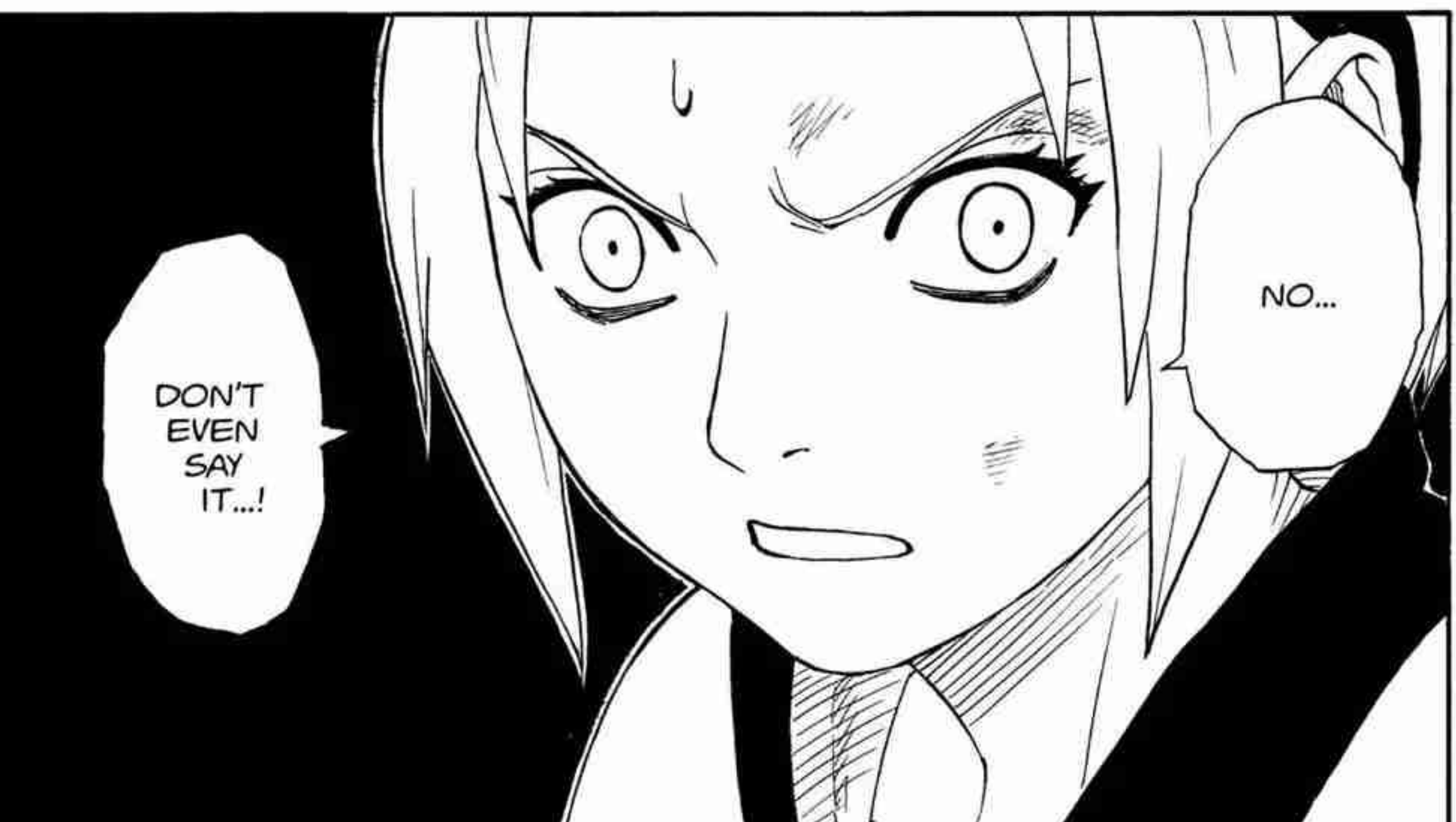
TO THINK THAT PROUD LOOK ON HIS FACE FOOLED ME INTO EXPECTING HIM TO ACTUALLY COME UP WITH SOMETHING!

SLUMP

WE NEVER SAW THE INSIDE OF A HEAVEN SCROLL IN THE FIRST PLACE, SO THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT IT SAID!

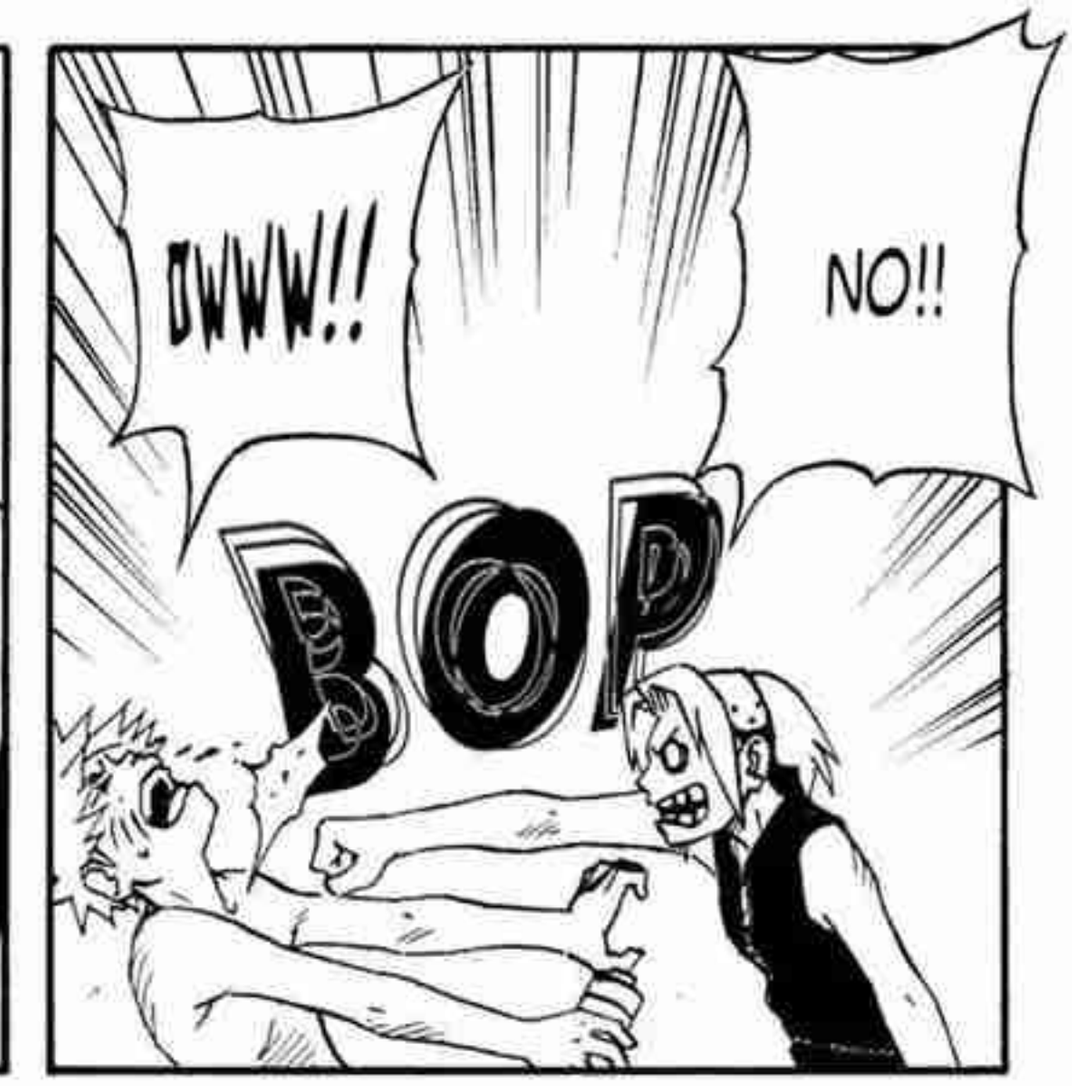
IT'S NO USE EVEN TRYING TO MAKE A FAKE!!!

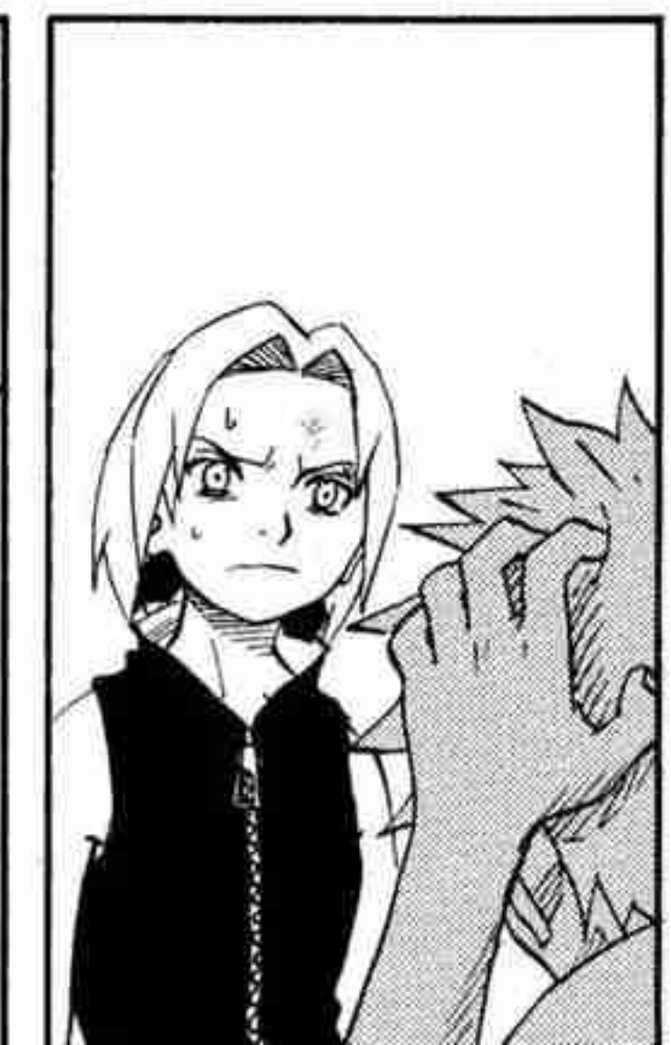
SO WHAT?!



...IT HOLDS THE SECRET...

I'M GONNA OPEN IT!





LUB DUB
LUB DUB
BE CAREFUL...
THIS MAY BE A TRAP... OR A SPELL.
PEEL
I KNOW! I GET IT!
...
GULP!
NOD
FLAP

!!!

AAAARGH!!

DIMMG

AND WE'RE ALMOST OUT OF TIME!!

THIS IS NOT GOOD! THEY'RE BOTH UN-CONSCIOUS...

H-HEY! WHAT IS IT?!

WHAT HAPPENED?! HEY!!

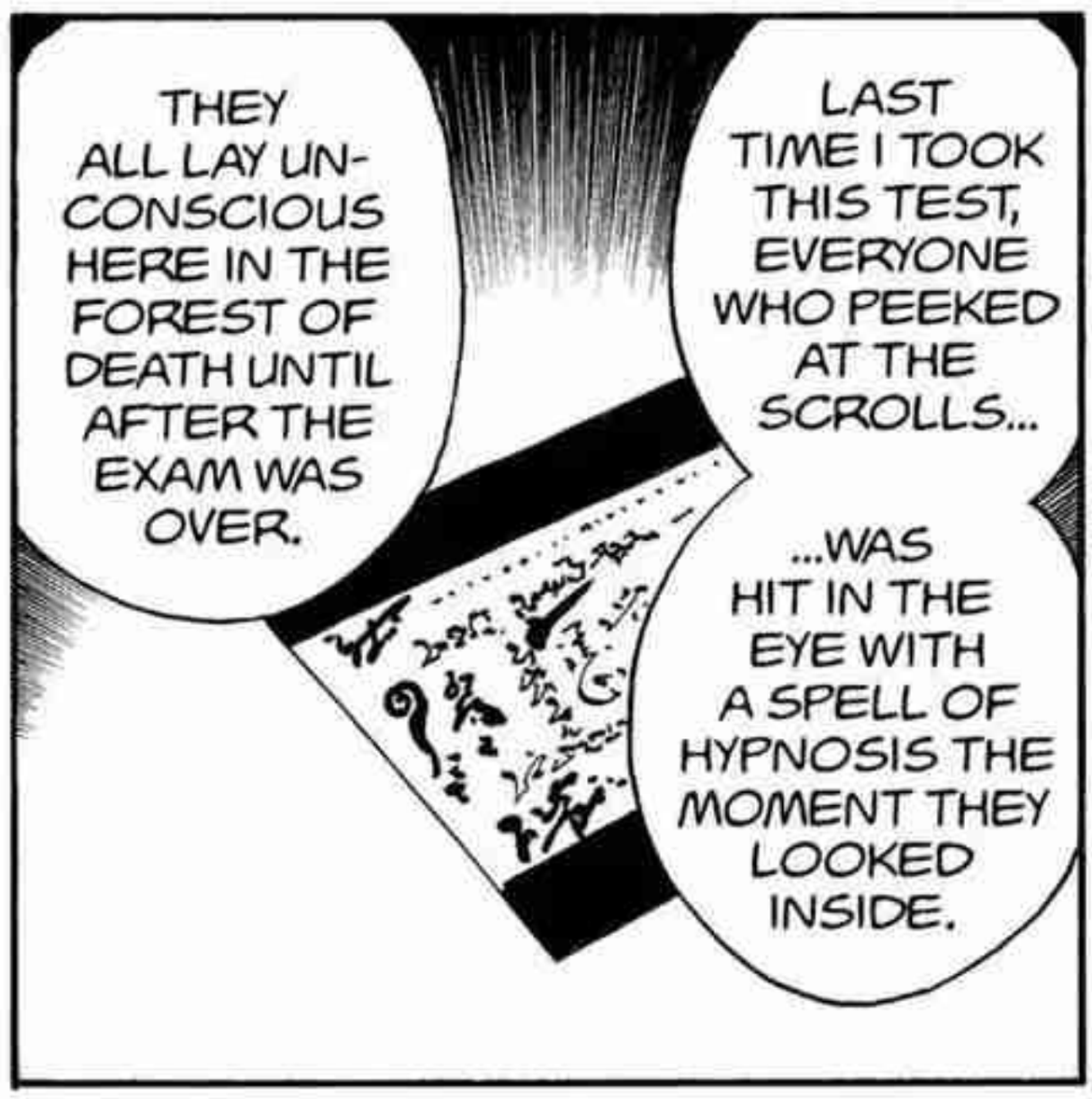
TAK!!

I WOULDN'T DO THAT IF I WERE YOU.

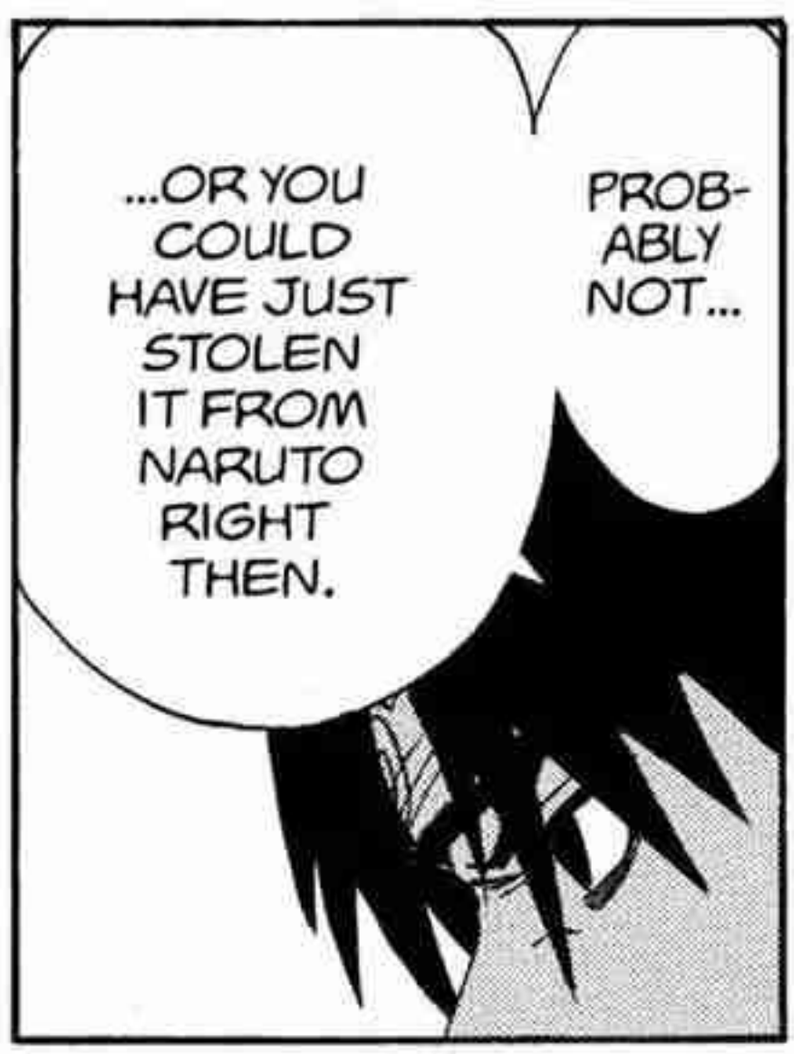
DON'T YOU REMEMBER THE RULES?!

READ THIS WAY
!!
!!!
TAK!!
AN ENEMY...?!
...YOU'RE HOPELESS! I CAN'T TURN MY BACK ON YOU FOR ONE MINUTE!

...
I-I'M SORRY...
THAT WAS CLOSE...


THEY ALL LAY UN-CONSCIOUS HERE IN THE FOREST OF DEATH UNTIL AFTER THE EXAM WAS OVER.
LAST TIME I TOOK THIS TEST, EVERYONE WHO PEEKED AT THE SCROLLS...
...WAS HIT IN THE EYE WITH A SPELL OF HYPNOSIS THE MOMENT THEY LOOKED INSIDE.

"...WILL FIND THEM-SELVES IN A SITUATION WHERE THEY WILL BE FORCED TO WITHDRAW FROM THE EXAM."
"THOSE WHO DISOBEY THE RULES..."


...OR YOU COULD HAVE JUST STOLEN IT FROM NARUTO RIGHT THEN.
PROB-ABLY NOT...

WELL... I WASN'T AFTER YOUR SCROLL, IF THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE IMPLYING.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING WANDERING AROUND BY YOURSELF?
YOUR NAME IS KABUTO, ISN'T IT?

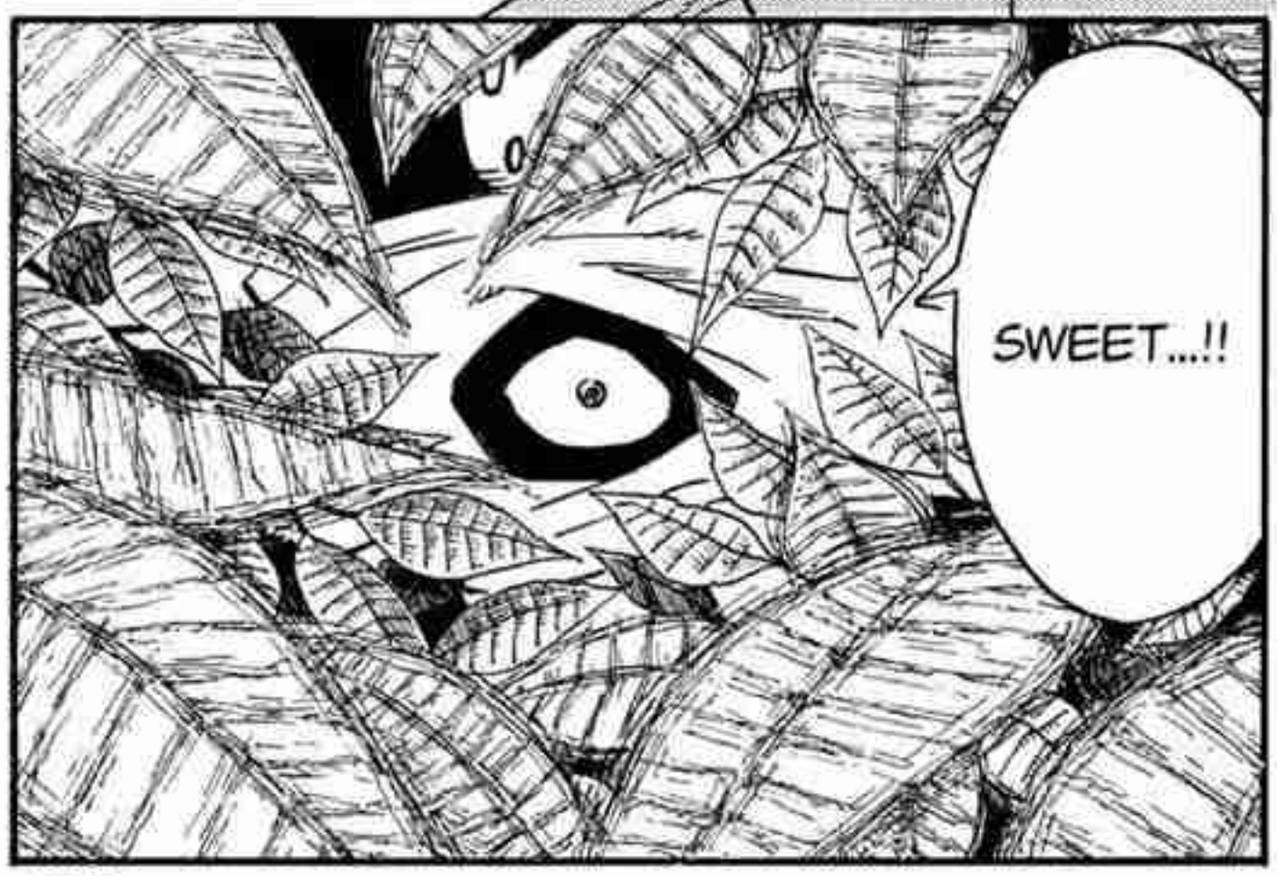
BUT I GOT SEPARATED FROM MY TEAM. I'M ON MY WAY TO JOIN UP WITH THEM AT THE TOWER NOW.

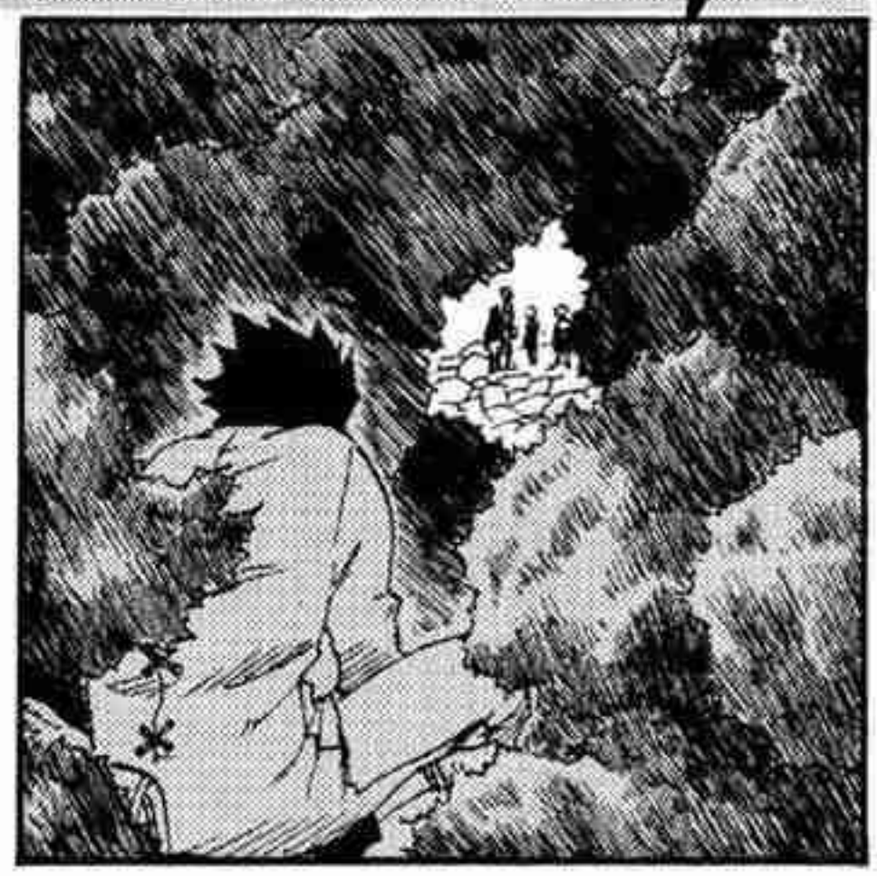
RUSTLE
BUT YOU'RE STILL AFTER THE HEAVEN SCROLL, TOO, AREN'T YOU?
NOPE... I'VE ALREADY GOT A SET.

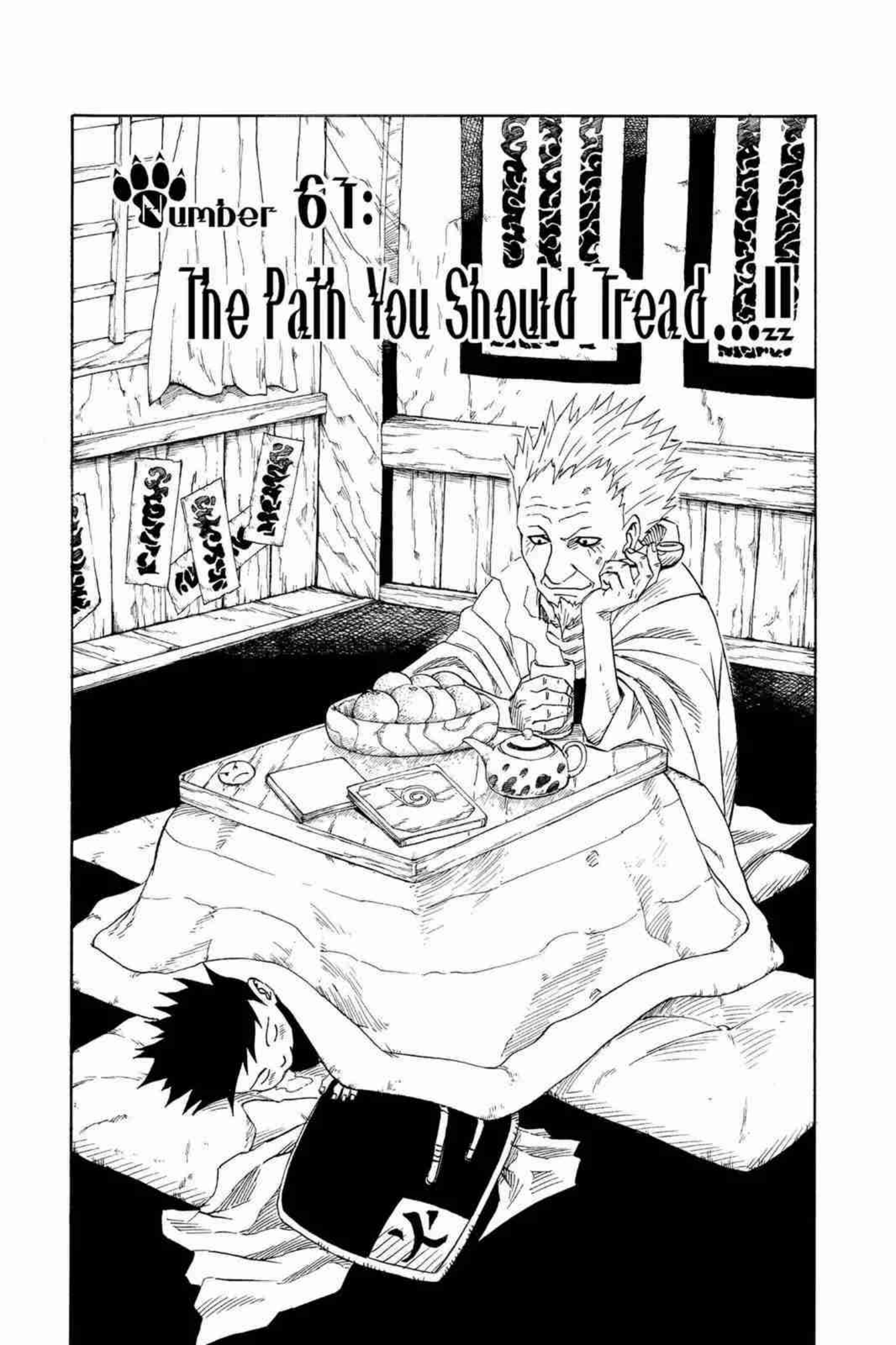
STEP
SEE YOU AROUND.
WAIT!!

WHAT?!

FIGHT ME.


SWEET...!!




Number 61:
The Path You Should Tread...!!
ZZ

FIGHT YOU...?!

...

HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND?!
S-SASUKE...!!

...I WISH I WERE...
...BUT OUR TIME IS ALMOST UP.

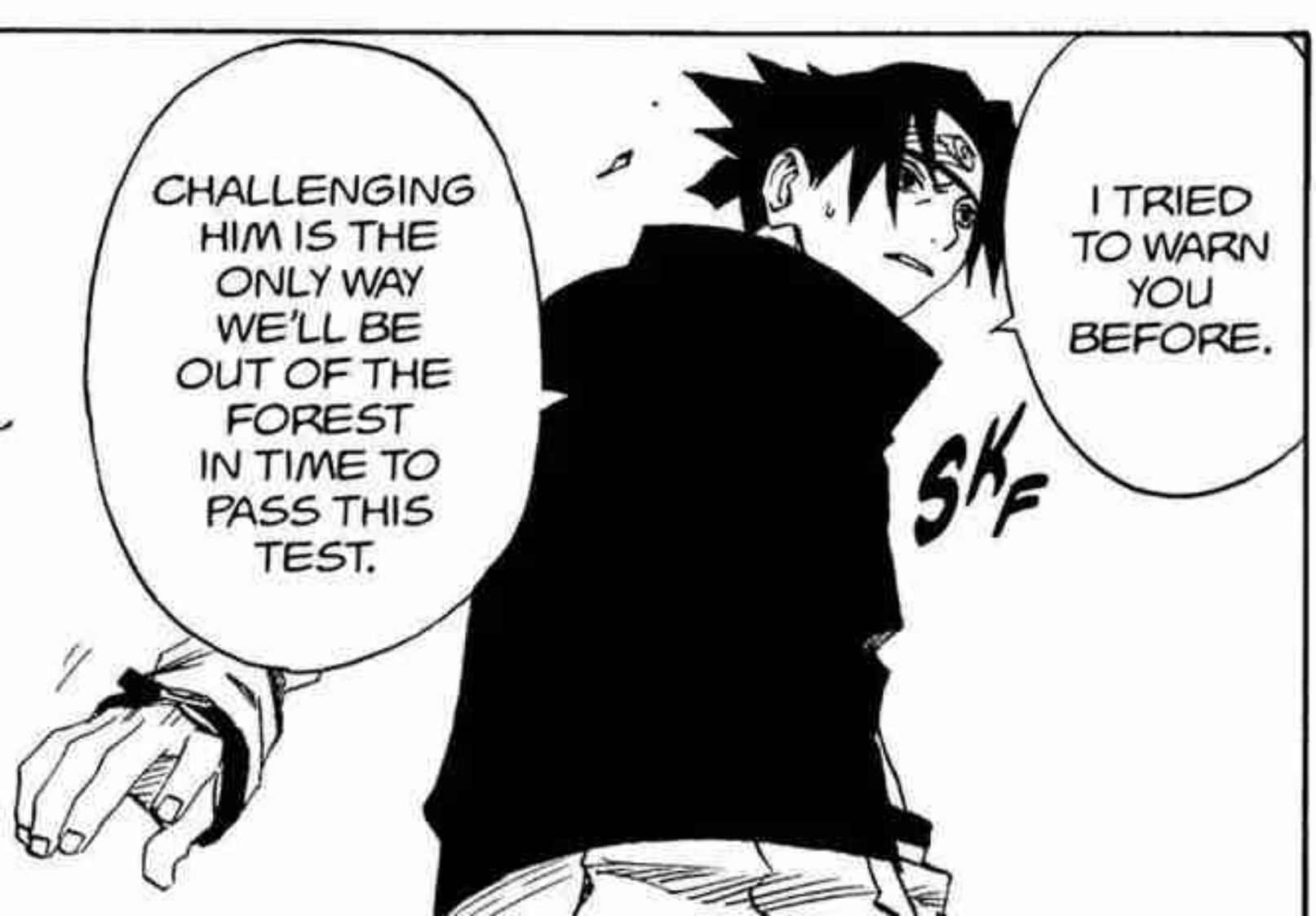
...
ARE YOU JOKING?

SHUT UP...!!

I...I'M SORRY, SASUKE, BUT I THINK NARUTO IS RIGHT.

SASUKE, THINK!!

KABUTO JUST SAVED OUR BUTTS, YOU KNOW!!



!

!

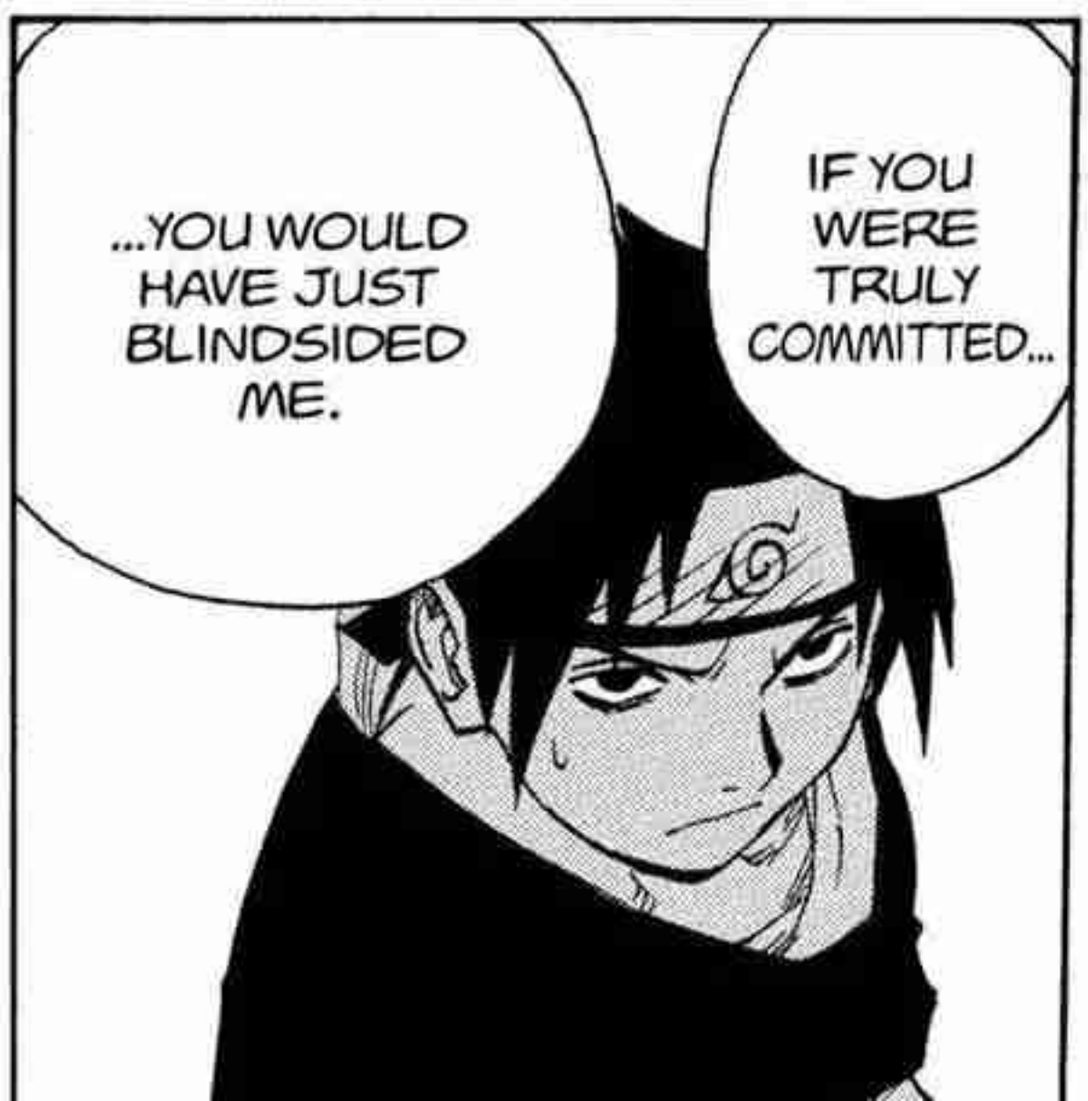
THAT'S A LIE.

!!

...!!

YOU'RE MORE INTERESTED IN MAKING A BIG GESTURE THAN IN REACHING YOUR GOAL...

...A LIE...?


...YOU WOULD HAVE JUST BLINDSIDED ME.
IF YOU WERE TRULY COMMITTED...

YOU PUT ME ON GUARD AND ASSURED YOURSELF OF A FAIR FIGHT.
...OTHERWISE YOU WOULDN'T HAVE RUN THE RISK OF ISSUING THAT PRETENTIOUS FORMAL CHALLENGE.

...!!
THAT'S WHAT BEING A NINJA IS ALL ABOUT.
PUSH

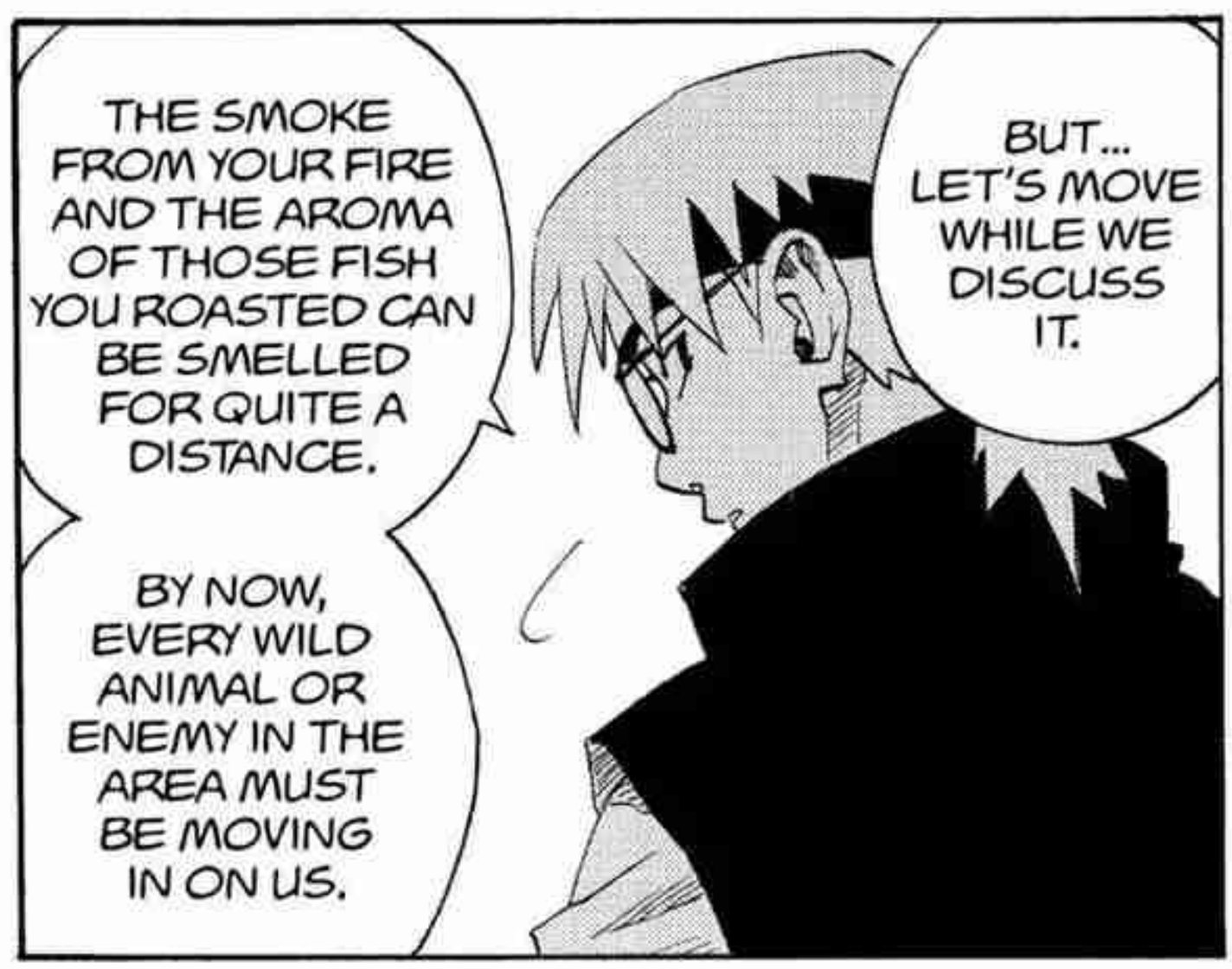
!
...THE PATH YOU SHOULD TREAD.
...LET ME SHOW YOU...
!

...IT'S GETTING PRETTY HEAVY IN HERE...
...WOW...

I DON'T THINK LESS OF YOU FOR BEING THAT WAY. IN FACT...
...

RATS!

RUSTLE


THE SMOKE FROM YOUR FIRE AND THE AROMA OF THOSE FISH YOU ROASTED CAN BE SMELLED FOR QUITE A DISTANCE.
BY NOW, EVERY WILD ANIMAL OR ENEMY IN THE AREA MUST BE MOVING IN ON US.
BUT... LET'S MOVE WHILE WE DISCUSS IT.

HOP HOP

IF YOU WERE MORE ALERT, YOU'D KNOW IT, TOO.
!

ARE THERE EVEN ANY ENEMIES LEFT THIS LATE?
LOTS OF 'EM!

WE ALL SHARE A COMMON GOAL...
...RIGHT? THE TOWER IN THE CENTER OF THE FOREST.

...
...UMM...

AND DO YOU KNOW THE INTELLIGENT THING TO DO?
IT TAKES INTELLIGENCE TO WIN BATTLES IN TERRITORY LIKE A JUNGLE OR FOREST...

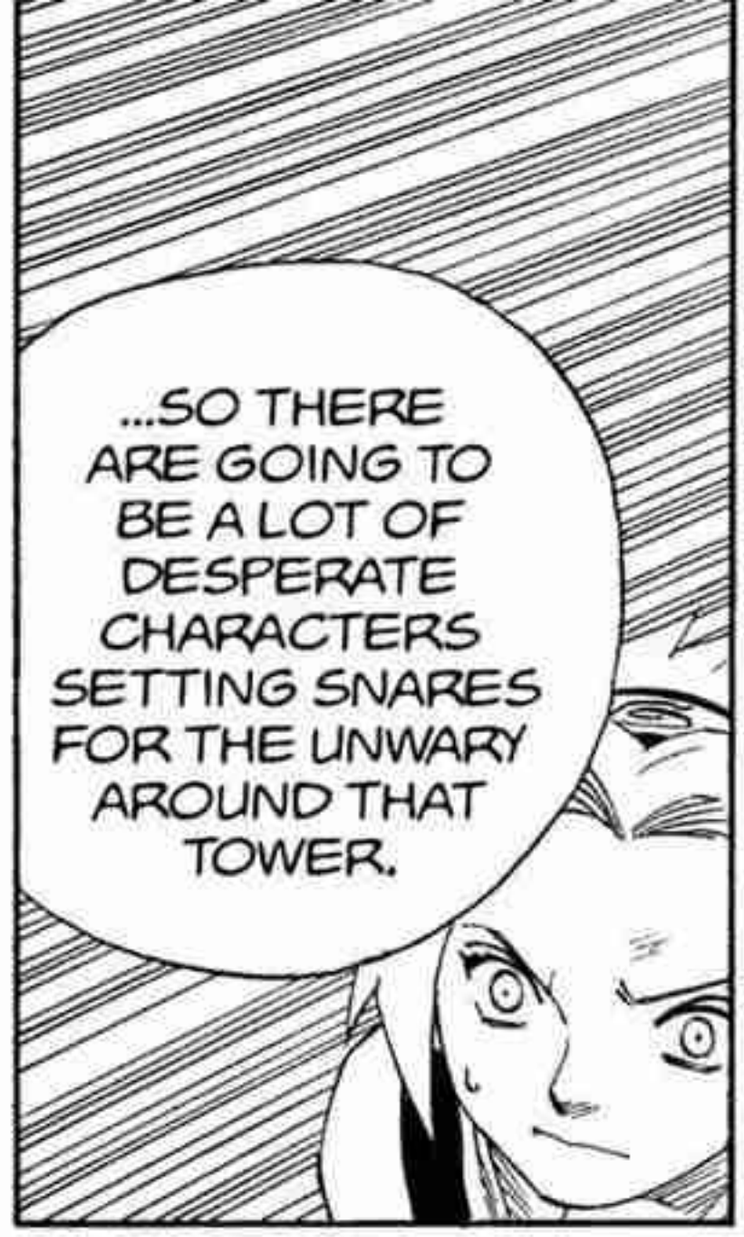
YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT... AN AMBUSH!!
OH!

SO THE CLOSER WE GET TO THE END OF THE EXAM, THE MORE PEOPLE WILL BE CARRYING SCROLLS TO THE FINISH LINE... MAKING THE TOWER AND ITS VICINITY...
...THE LIKELIEST PLACE TO FIND THEM.
TAK

...SOMEONE WHO HAS CAPTURED BOTH THE HEAVEN AND EARTH SCROLLS AND IS TAKING THEM BACK TO THE TOWER!
WE MAKE OUR TARGET...
OH! COOL! I GET IT!

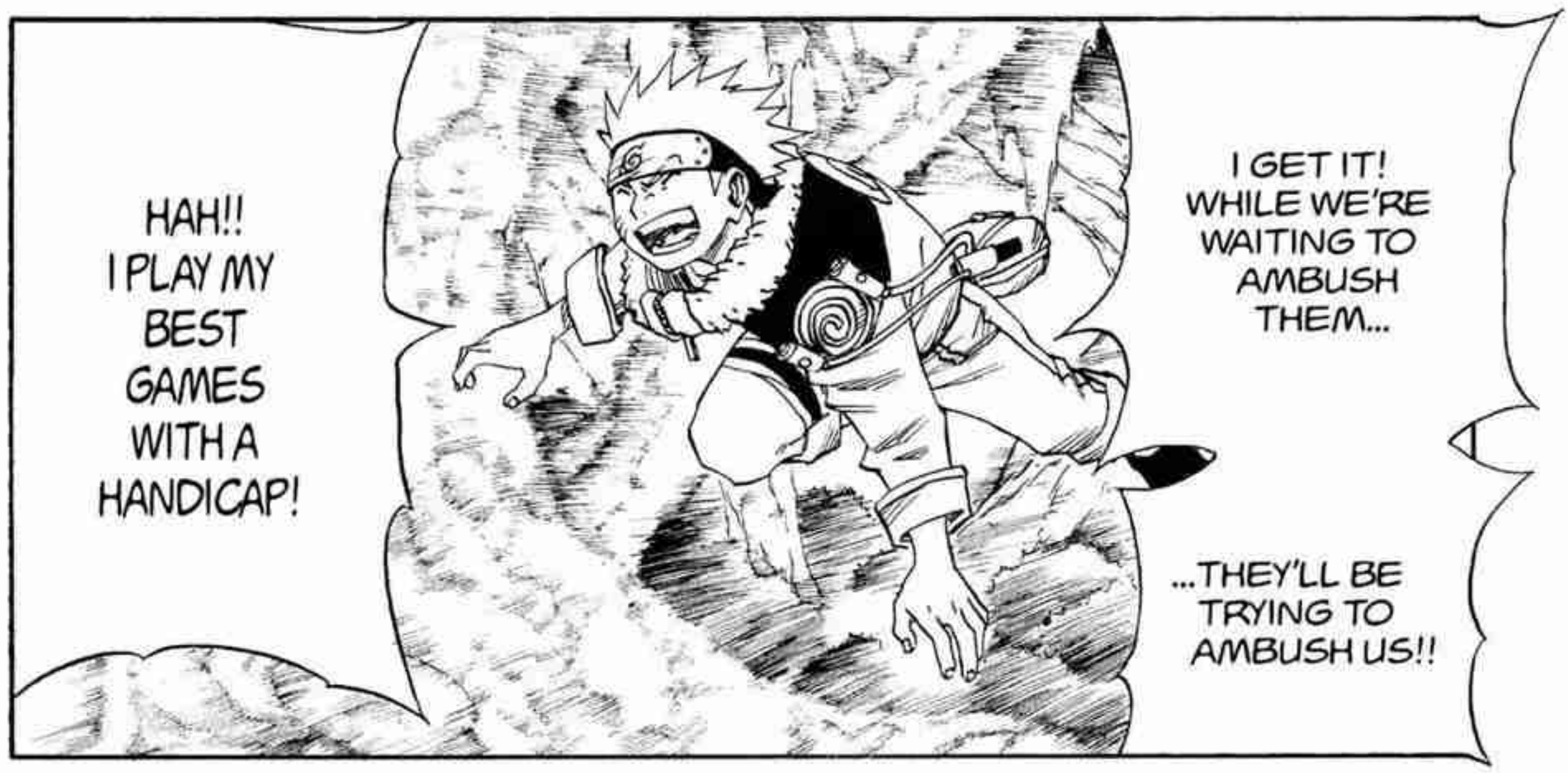
...?
...
GRIN

YOU'RE ONE-THIRD RIGHT.
HUH?


...SO THERE ARE GOING TO BE A LOT OF DESPERATE CHARACTERS SETTING SNARES FOR THE UNWARY AROUND THAT TOWER.

...!

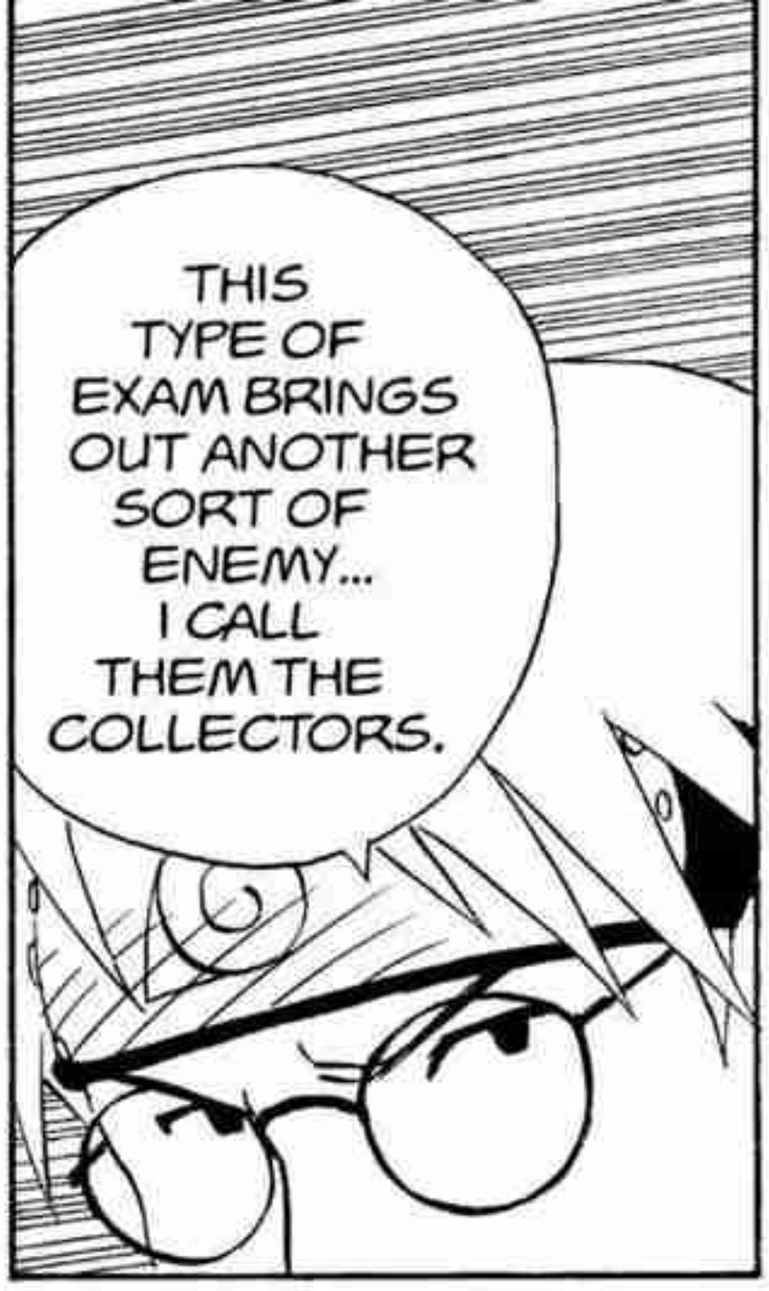
FIRST OF ALL, YOU WON'T BE THE ONLY ONES WHO'VE FIGURED THAT OUT...


HAH!! I PLAY MY BEST GAMES WITH A HANDICAP!
I GET IT! WHILE WE'RE WAITING TO AMBUSH THEM...
...THEY'LL BE TRYING TO AMBUSH US!!

KABUTO... WHAT'S THE REST OF THE ANSWER...?

...AND WALK AWAY WITH THE OTHER SCROLL WE NEED TO PASS THE SECOND EXAM!!
THIS IS GONNA BE SWEET! IT'LL BE WORTH A LITTLE SWEAT IF WE GET TO KICK EVERYONE ELSE'S BUTTS...

...AND YOU THINK YOU'RE HOME FREE, DON'T RELAX YOUR GUARD FOR AN INSTANT. THE CONDITIONS OF THIS EXAM ARE APT TO GIVE RISE TO THEM...
EVEN WHEN YOU'RE STANDING AT THE TOWER DOOR...
COLLECTORS?


THIS TYPE OF EXAM BRINGS OUT ANOTHER SORT OF ENEMY... I CALL THEM THE COLLECTORS.

...SO THEY TRY TO GET THEIR HANDS ON AS MANY EXTRA SETS OF SCROLLS AS THEY CAN TO BUY THEMSELVES SAFE PASSAGE FROM ANYONE THEY CAN'T OR WON'T FACE FAIRLY.
...BOTTOM FEEDERS. THEY'RE THE ONES WHO MAY NOT BE GOOD ENOUGH TO BEAT EVERY ENEMY THEY FIND...

...BECAUSE IF THOSE TEAMS ARE ON THEIR SECOND OR THIRD ATTEMPTS AT PASSING THE CHÛNIN EXAMS, THE COLLECTORS CAN BARTER THE SURPLUS SCROLLS FOR ADVANCE INTELLIGENCE ABOUT THE NEXT STAGES OF THE TEST.
SOME OF THEM ALSO WANT TO HAVE EXTRA SCROLLS TO OFFER OTHER TEAMS FROM THEIR HOME VILLAGES WHO MAY NOT HAVE FARED AS WELL...

...JUST SO THEY'LL HAVE LESS COMPETITION TO DEAL WITH AS THEY MOVE ON TO THE THIRD EXAM AND BEYOND.
AND THERE ARE THOSE WHO AREN'T AFTER YOUR SCROLL... THEY'RE AFTER YOUR LIFE! THEY WANT TO ELIMINATE STRONG TEAMS NOW...

TAK
...!!

ULP!
...!!

AND, AS YOU CAN PROBABLY GUESS, MOST OF THESE SHREWD, RUTHLESS TEAMS NEVER MAKE THE MISTAKE...
...OF GETTING COMPLACENT OR LETTING THEIR OWN GUARD DOWN. THOSE ARE THE DEADLIEST...
...AND THE WORST!!
SMAK

...THAT'S WHY YOU DIDN'T JUST TAKE OFF AFTER HELPING US. YOU'RE VULNERABLE, TOO!
SO...

...RIGHT.

SAFETY IN NUMBERS, EH?

...!

HERE'S WHERE THE FUN REALLY BEGINS.
WE'RE IN VIEW OF THE TOWER...

!!
AN ENEMY... SO SOON?!

!!

THEN LET'S GET TO IT!!

TAK
OVER THERE!!
FLIP
AT
KZ

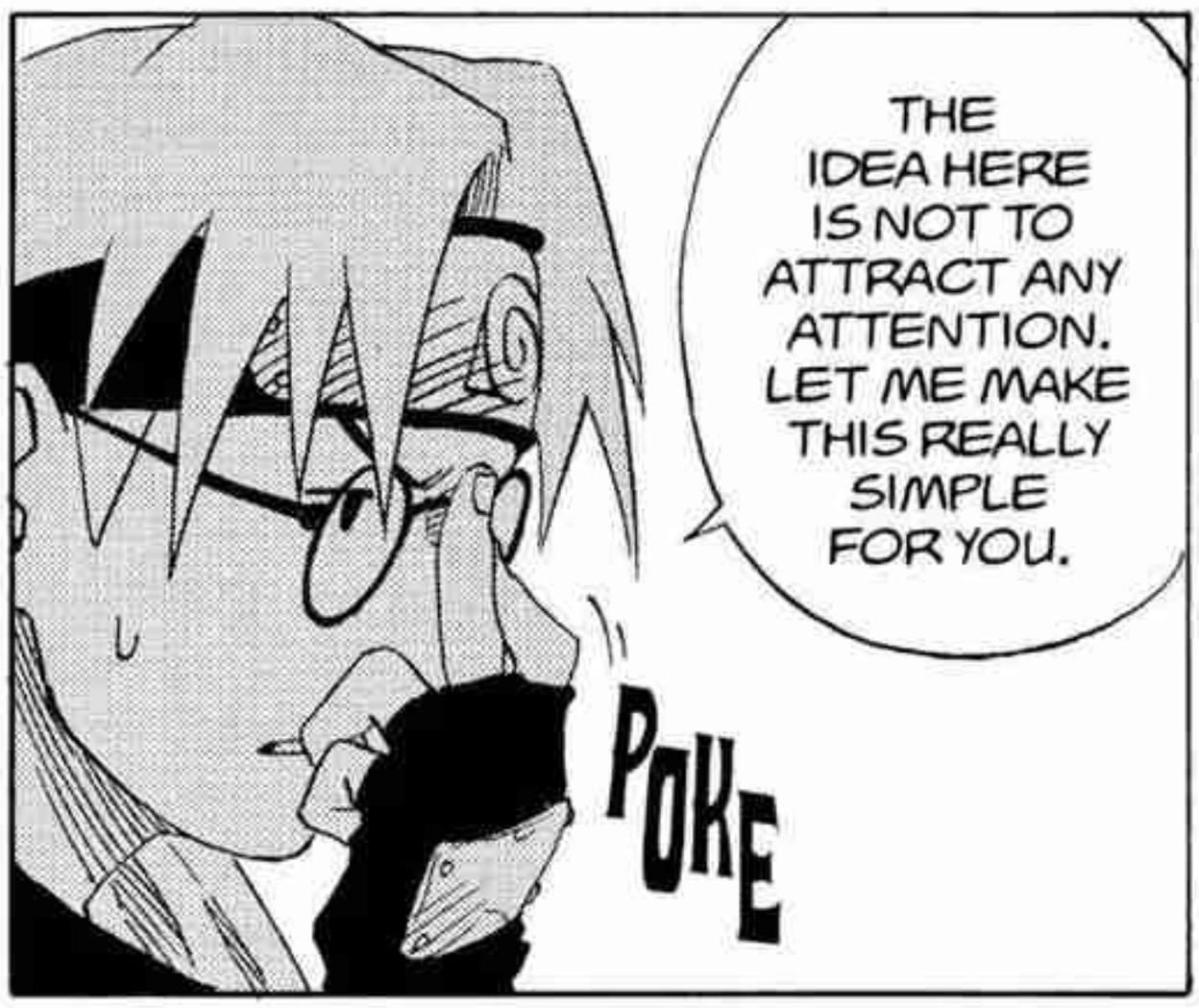
CHANG
GLUK
NG
SKRIT
SKRIT
SKRIT
...
!!
!!
!

THAT IS SO GROSS!!

A REALLY BIG CENTIPEDE...

WOW!

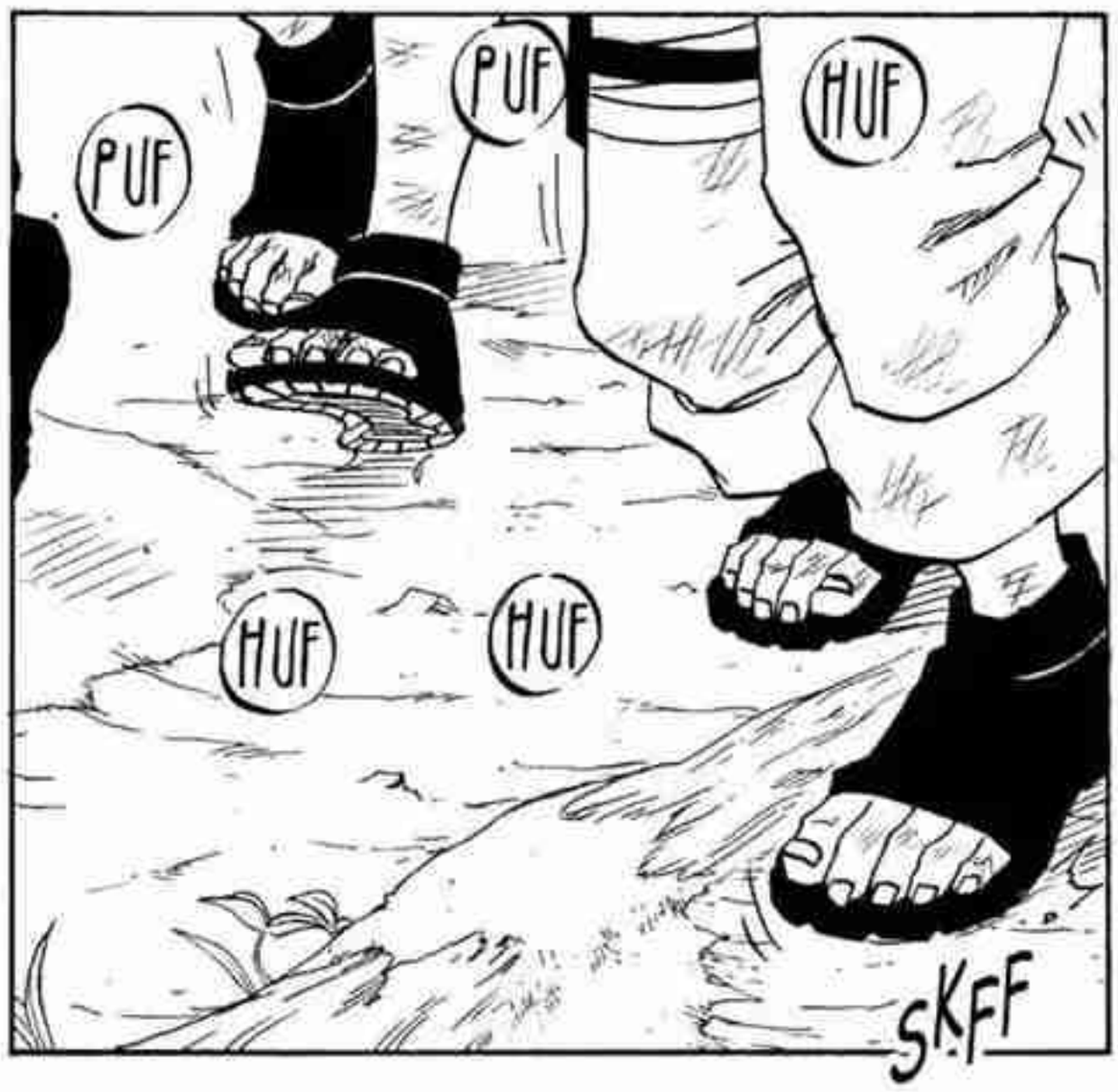
AW, MAN! IT WAS A CENTIPEDE!



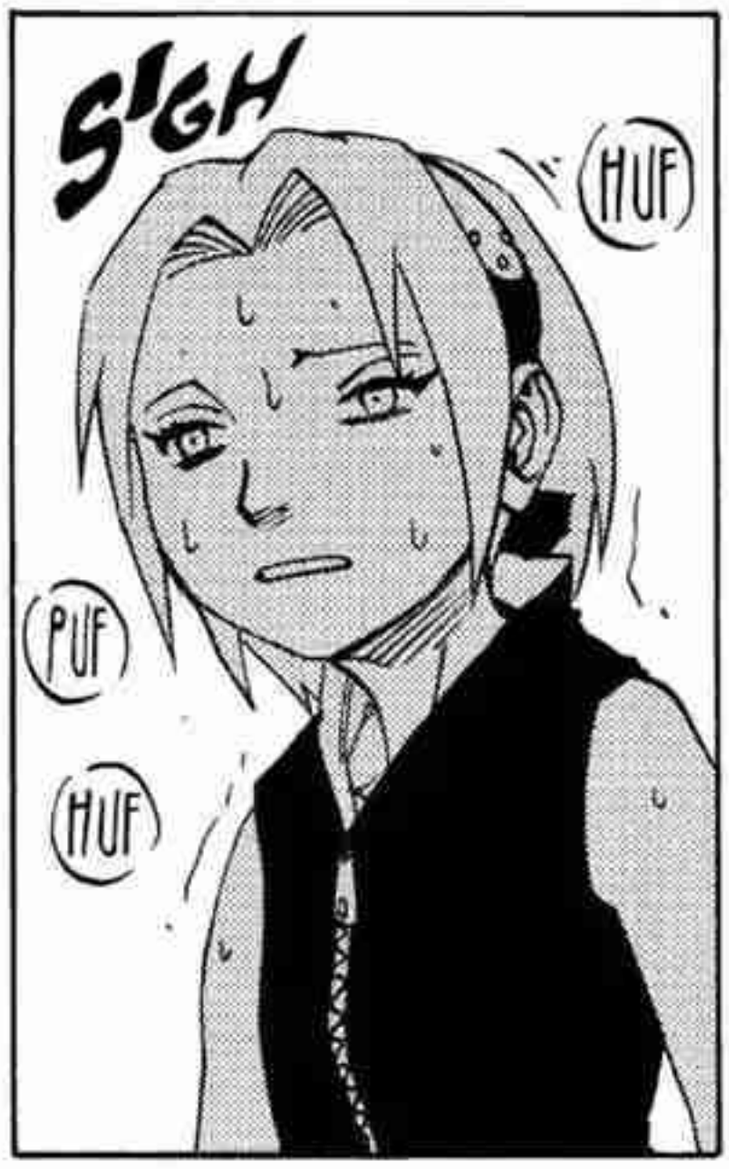
...RIGHT.

OKAY...

GOTCHA!
MMM

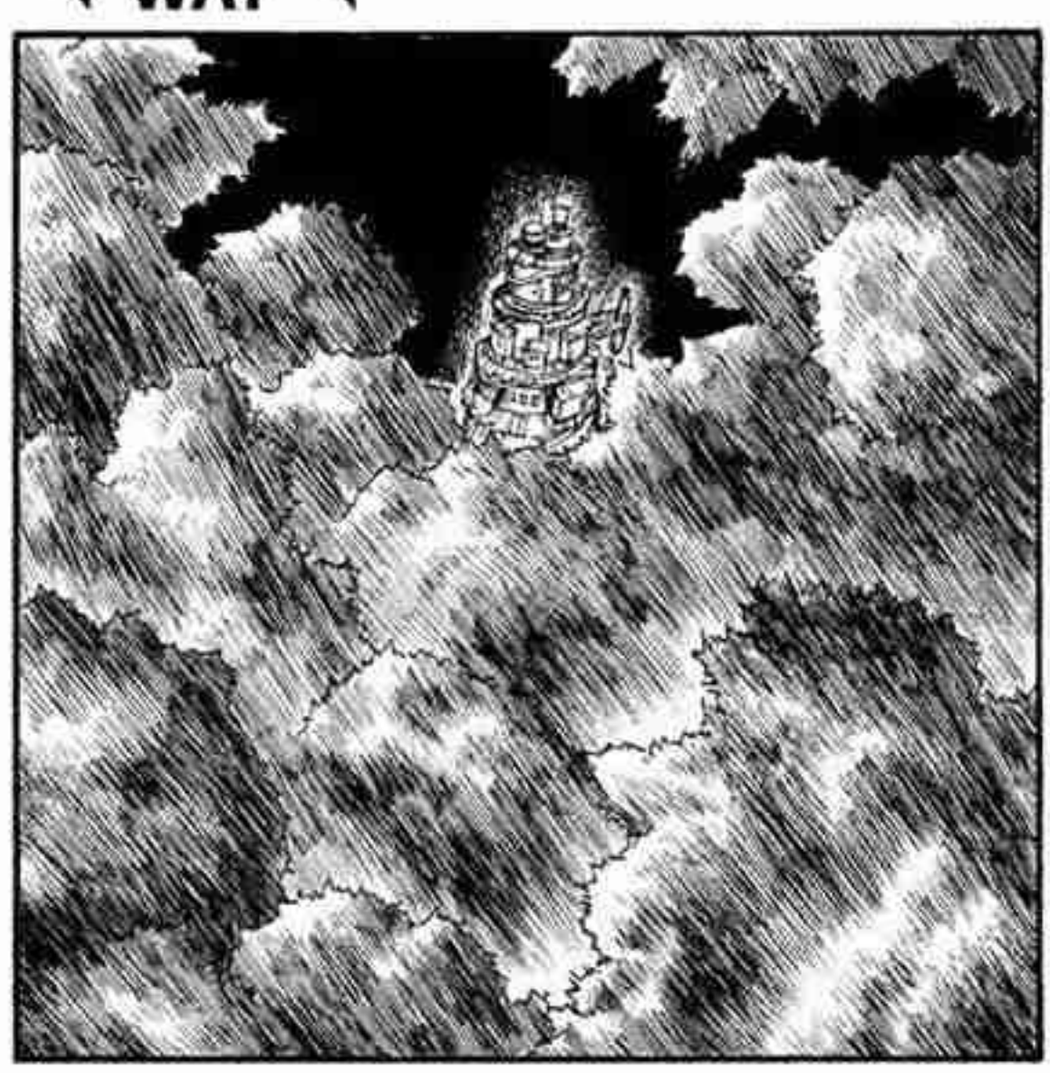

PUF
PUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
SKFF

FLOP
I'M SORRY... I'M DONE...


SIGH
HUF
PUF
HUF

SKF
SKF
SKF

READ THIS WAY



I-I DON'T KNOW HOW FAR WE'VE COME...
SAKURA...!!
BUT THE TOWER NEVER GETS ANY CLOSER.
HUF
PUF
HUF
PUF

...WE'RE ALREADY ENJOYING SOME ENEMY'S WARM WELCOME!
APPAR-ENTLY...

IT'S BIZARRE. IT'S RIGHT IN FRONT OF US, PLAIN AS DAY...
...
...SHE'S RIGHT!
PUF
HUF
PUF
HUF

AW, MAN! NO WAY!

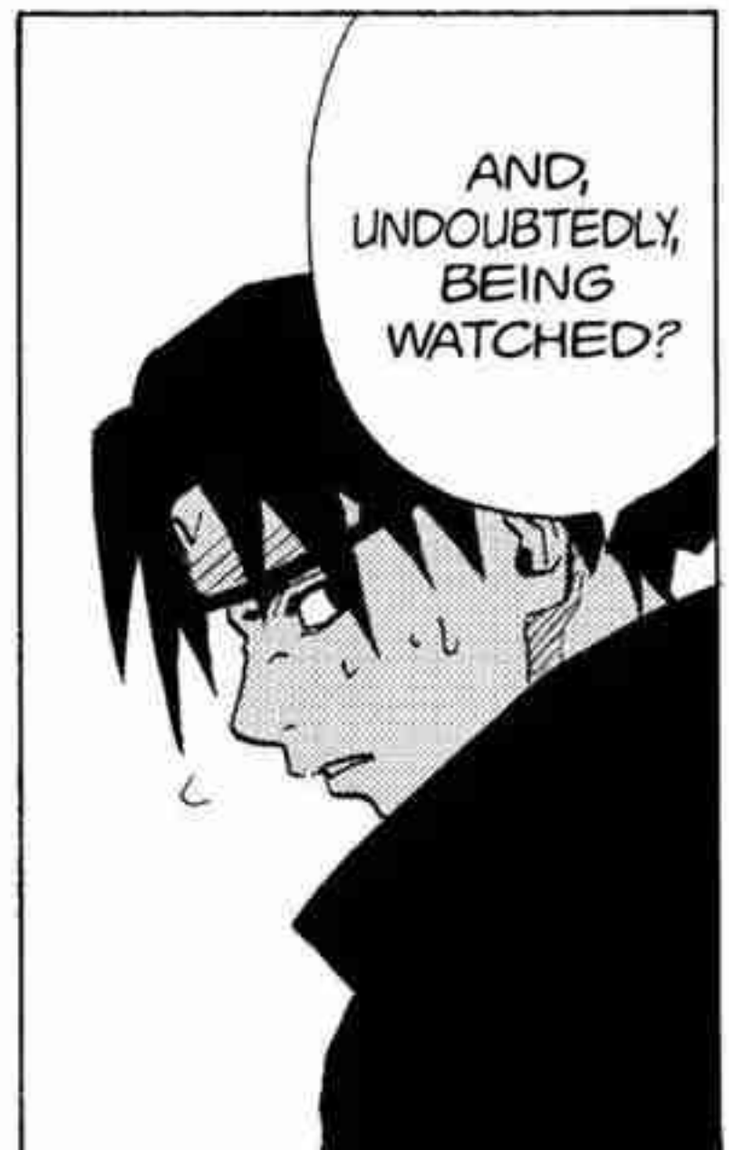
!!
HUF

LOOK!
SHF

A GENJUTSU (ILLUSION) ...?
HUF

YOU HAVE GOT TO BE KIDDING!!

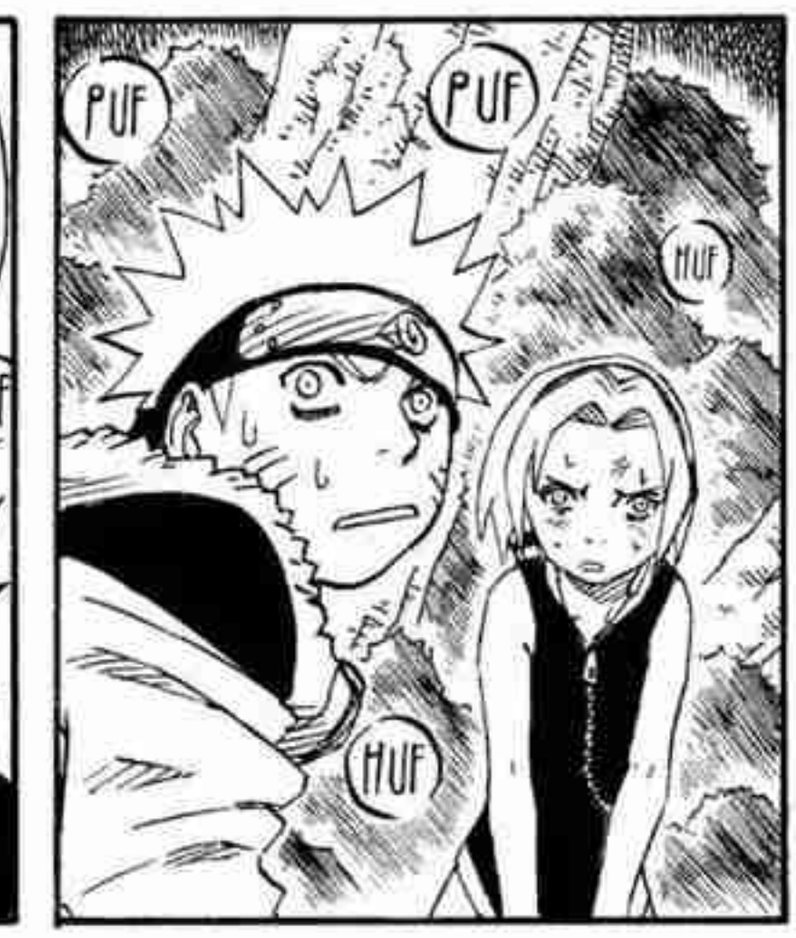
WH-WHAT IS THIS CRAP?!


AND, UNDOUBTEDLY, BEING WATCHED?

WE'VE BEEN VERY, VERY CAUTIOUSLY....
...RUNNING AROUND IN CIRCLES!
HUF
THAT'S WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE!
AND WE FELL FOR IT!

...SO THEY CAN MOVE IN AND TAKE US DOWN!

IT WOULD MAKE SENSE. WHOEVER DID THIS IS WAITING FOR US TO WEAR OURSELVES OUT...



TRIED

SLIP

SILLI

SWUP

SLIDE

THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI
MY PERSONAL HISTORY, PART 4: GRADE-SCHOOL OBSESSIONS

BY THE MIDDLE OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, MY INTEREST HAD GROWN TO INCLUDE SCULPTING AND MODEL-MAKING. INITIALLY, ANY TIME MY PARENTS WOULDN'T BUY ME A TOY I REALLY WANTED, I'D MAKE IT FOR MYSELF OUT OF CLAY. BUT THAT DIDN'T SATISFY ME FOR LONG, SO I TURNED TO THE PLASTIC MODELS BASED ON THE GUNDAM SERIES -- GUNPLA (GUNDAM PLASTIC) FOR SHORT. I GOT SOME FOR A NEW YEAR'S GIFT AND ASSEMBLED THEM IN AN ABSOLUTE FRENZY. THE NEXT FAD WAS PLAMORAJICON (OR PLARAJI) -- RADIO-CONTROLLED PLASTIC MODEL VEHICLES -- AND I JUMPED ON THAT PONY AS WELL (IN AMERICA, THESE WERE CALLED R/C CARS).

I NAMED MY PLARAJI "THE ELEPHANT," MADE AN ELEPHANT-SHAPED DECAL OUT OF SHEET PLASTIC, STUCK IT ON, AND RACED IT... DUE, NO DOUBT, TO THE INFLUENCE OF A POPULAR MANGA OF THE TIME CALLED "RAJICON BOY." THE PLARAJI I OWNED WAS BASED ON THE MITSUBISHI PAJERO, BUT IT WASN'T VERY FAST, AND WAS CONSTANTLY BEING OVERTAKEN BY THE PLARAJIS OF MY LITTLE BROTHER AND ALL OF MY FRIENDS. THIS ANNOYED ME VERY MUCH, SO I REMODELED MY PAJERO WITH THE "GRASSHOPPER UPGRADE KIT," WHICH WAS ACTUALLY DESIGNED FOR A DIFFERENT MODEL ENTIRELY. I MELTED THE PAJERO'S PLASTIC CHASSIS WITH A SOLDERING IRON -- NEVER GIVING A THOUGHT TO THE TOXIC FUMES BEING RELEASED INTO THE UNVENTILATED LITTLE ROOM -- AND WAS ECSTATIC WHEN I SUCCEEDED IN MAKING THE UPGRADE. BUT MY IDIOTIC ELATION WAS SHORT-LIVED, AS NEW PROBLEMS QUICKLY UNFOLDED!

BECAUSE I HAD FORCIBLY WELDED INCOMPATIBLE PARTS ONTO MY CAR, THE PAJERO'S BODY NO LONGER FIT WELL ONTO THE CHASSIS. I WAS TERRIBLY DEPRESSED OVER THE IRREVERSIBLE DAMAGE I'D DONE TO MY CAR, WITH THE BODY LEANING OFF THE CHASSIS AT ABOUT A TEN-DEGREE ANGLE, BUT I INSISTED THAT APPEARANCE MEANT NOTHING. A PLARAJI SHOULD BE JUDGED BY HOW IT PERFORMS, NOT HOW IT LOOKS! BUT WHEN WE RACED AGAIN, THE OTHERS OUTMATCHED MY POOR LITTLE CAR IN BOTH SPEED **AND** APPEARANCE.

UNDAUNTED EVEN AFTER GETTING HIT WITH THIS ONE-TWO COMBINATION OF DISAPPOINTMENTS, I MANAGED TO GET MY HANDS ON AN INCREDIBLE MOTOR CALLED THE "BLACK MOTOR ANGELS" AND INSTALLED IT IN THE PAJERO. "I'LL NEVER LOSE AGAIN!" I SAID, AND FINALLY WON THE RACING VICTORY THAT HAD BEEN MY HEART'S DESIRE. BUT THE MOTOR WAS SO POWERFUL THAT SUDDENLY SMOKE BEGAN POURING OUT OF THE CONTROLS. THE PAJERO WOULD NEVER ENTER ANOTHER RACE. I KEPT IT ON DISPLAY IN MY ROOM, BUT IN MY HEART I WAS DESPONDENT AND FULL OF REGRET ABOUT EVER HAVING TRIED THE GRASSHOPPER UPGRADE KIT.

62: Trapped Like Rats!!

WH-WHAT THE...?
SLITHER

SLIP SLIDE
...NOT TO MENTION ALL THE DOPPEL-GANGERS.
THERE ARE A LOT OF THEM...

HUF
!!

YOU'RE ALL TRAPPED LIKE RATS!
HEH HEH...

AK

SHUT UP!!
AK

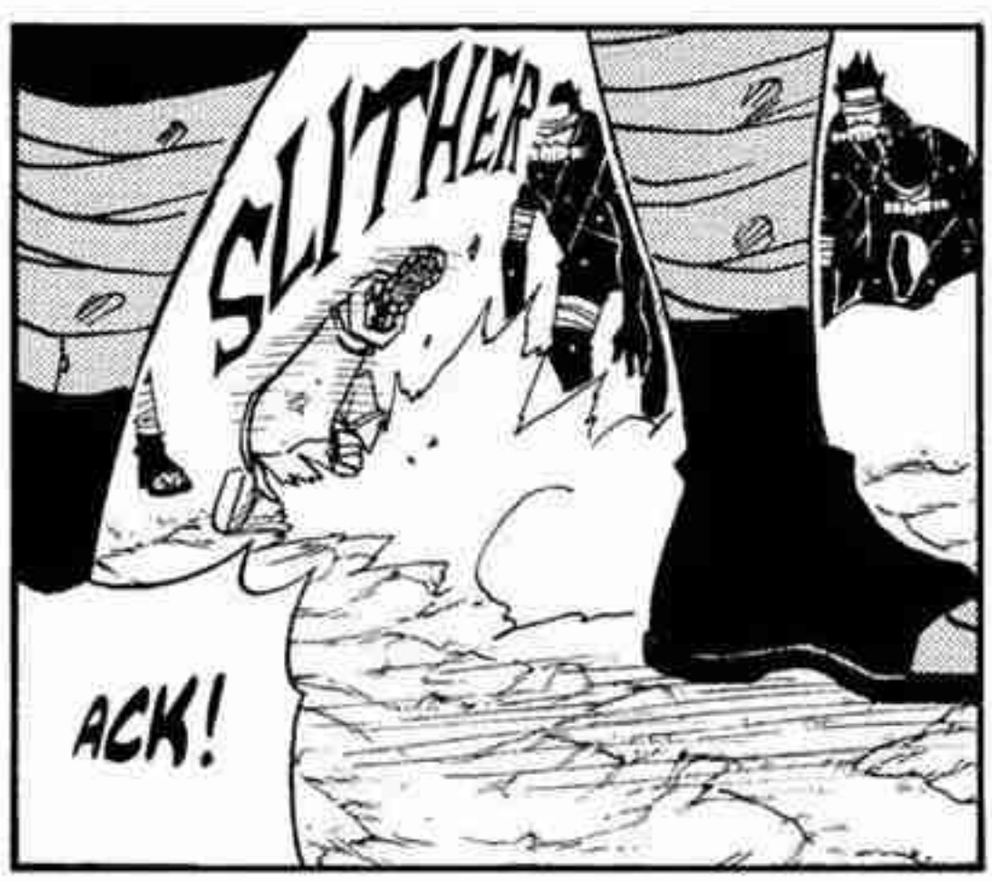
HIP

I GUESS THEY JUST CAN'T TAKE IT!
GOOD ONE, NARUTO!!

HUNH?!

!!

!!


SLITHER
ACK!

WH-WHAT ARE THEY...?!
GRRR

POK
SHLUK

!!

SHARIN-GAN!!

I'VE GOT TO SEE TO THE HEART OF WHAT'S GOING ON!!

FW UP

!!

NARUTO!

TAK

!!

SLUPP

!!

THUK THUK

SPLAT

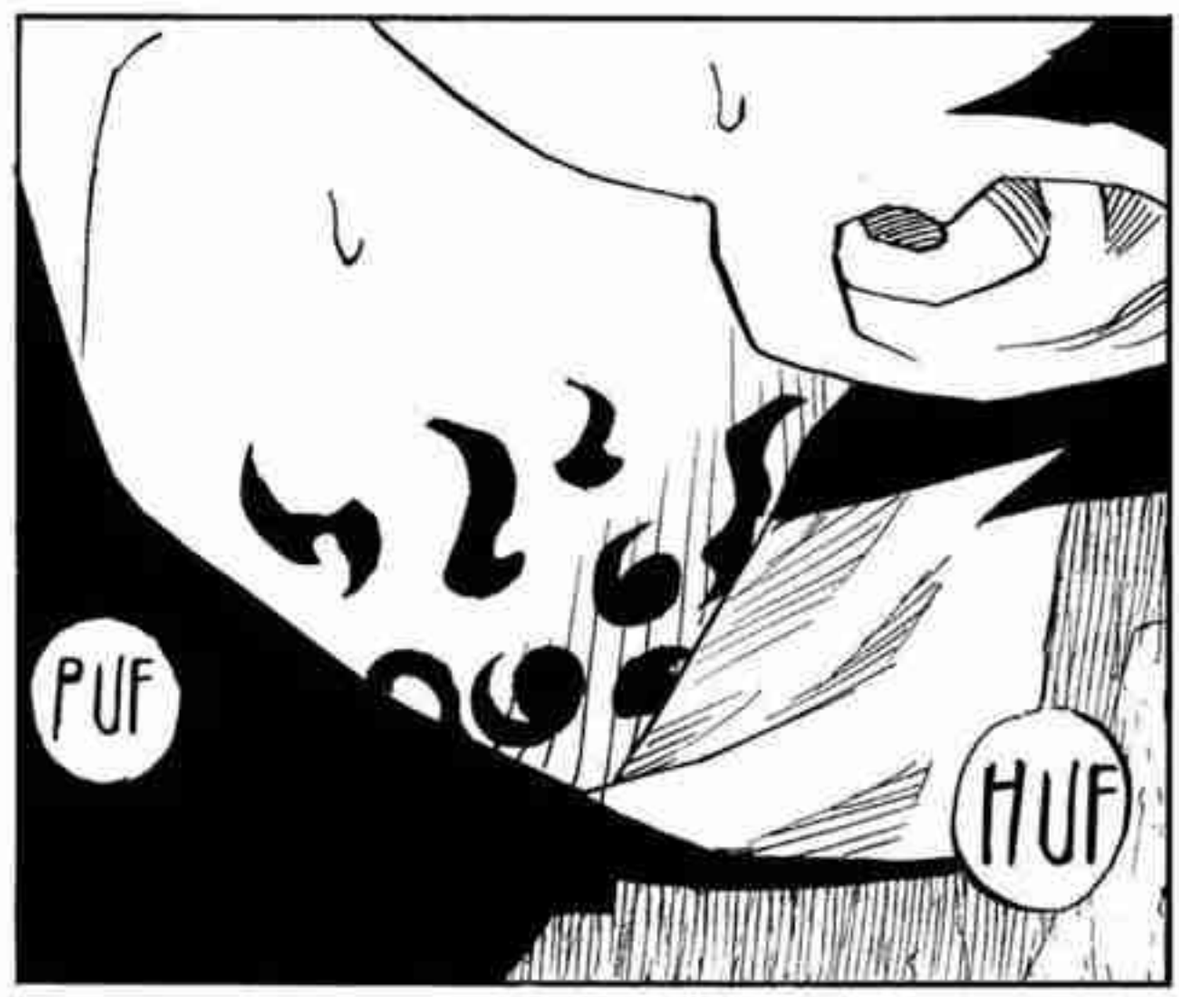
FLUNG

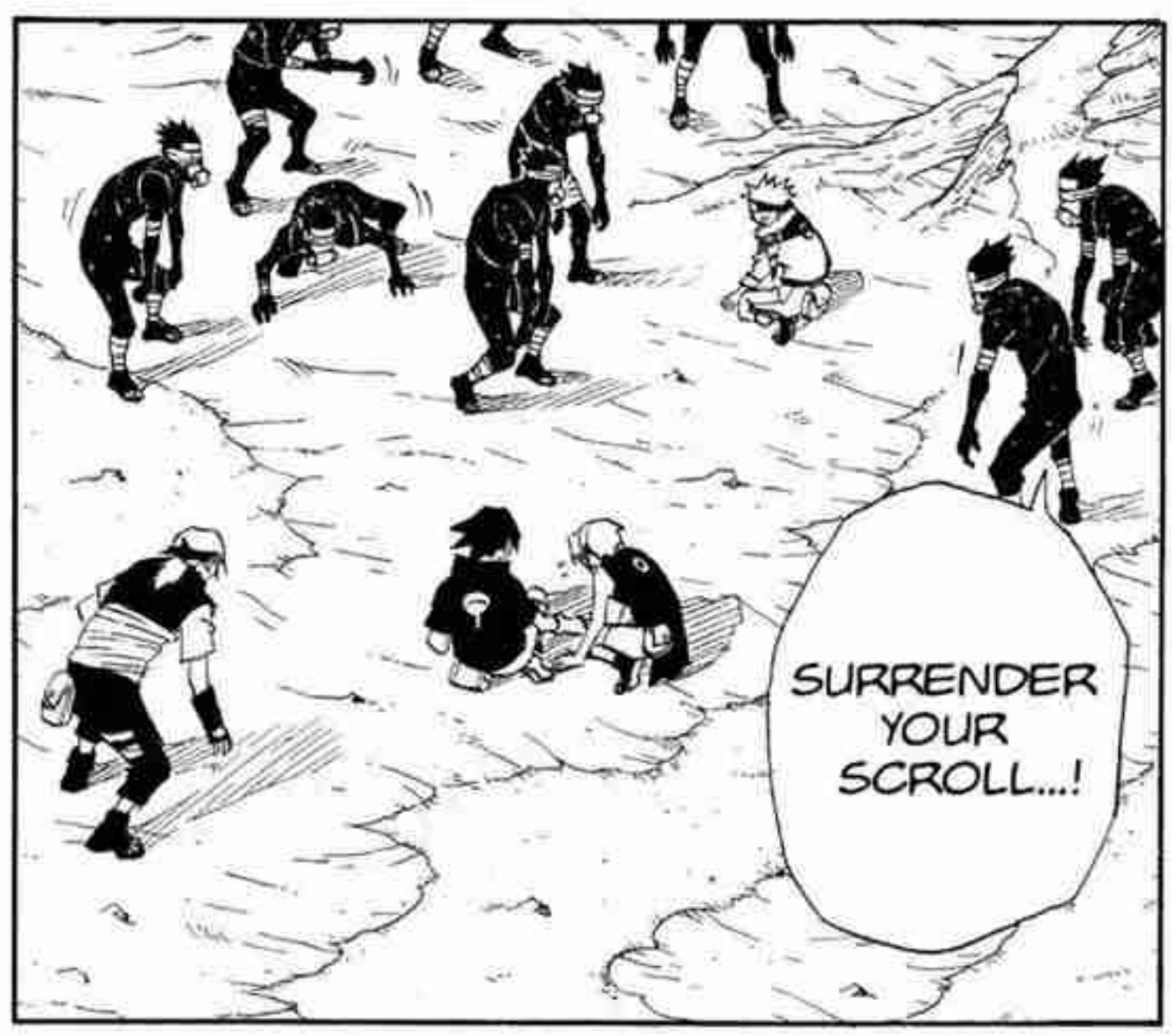
SASUKE!!

!!

WHAT ARE YOU--?! GET DOWN!!!

BAM





...EVEN WHEN DOPPEL-GANGERS HAVE SOME SUBSTANCE, THEY USUALLY FADE AWAY ONCE YOU BEAT THEM... AND THESE GUYS ARE STILL HERE. SO IS THIS GENJUTSU AFTER ALL? WHICH IS IT?!

PUF

DOES THE FACT THAT THEY PHYSICALLY HURT KABUTO MEAN THESE GUYS ARE SOLID DOPPELGANGERS AND NOT JUST ILLUSIONS...?

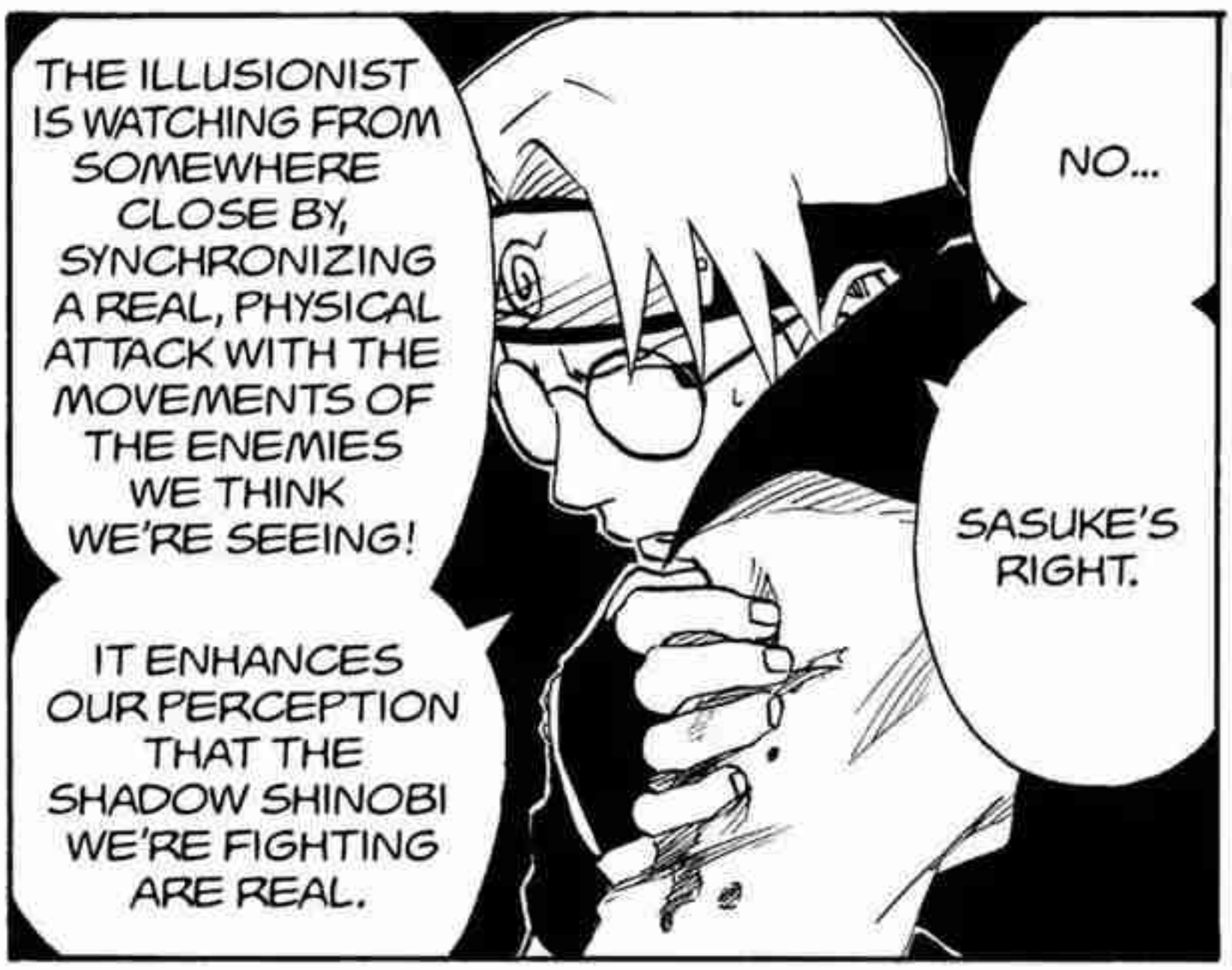
HUF

WAIT! IT'S NO GOOD!!

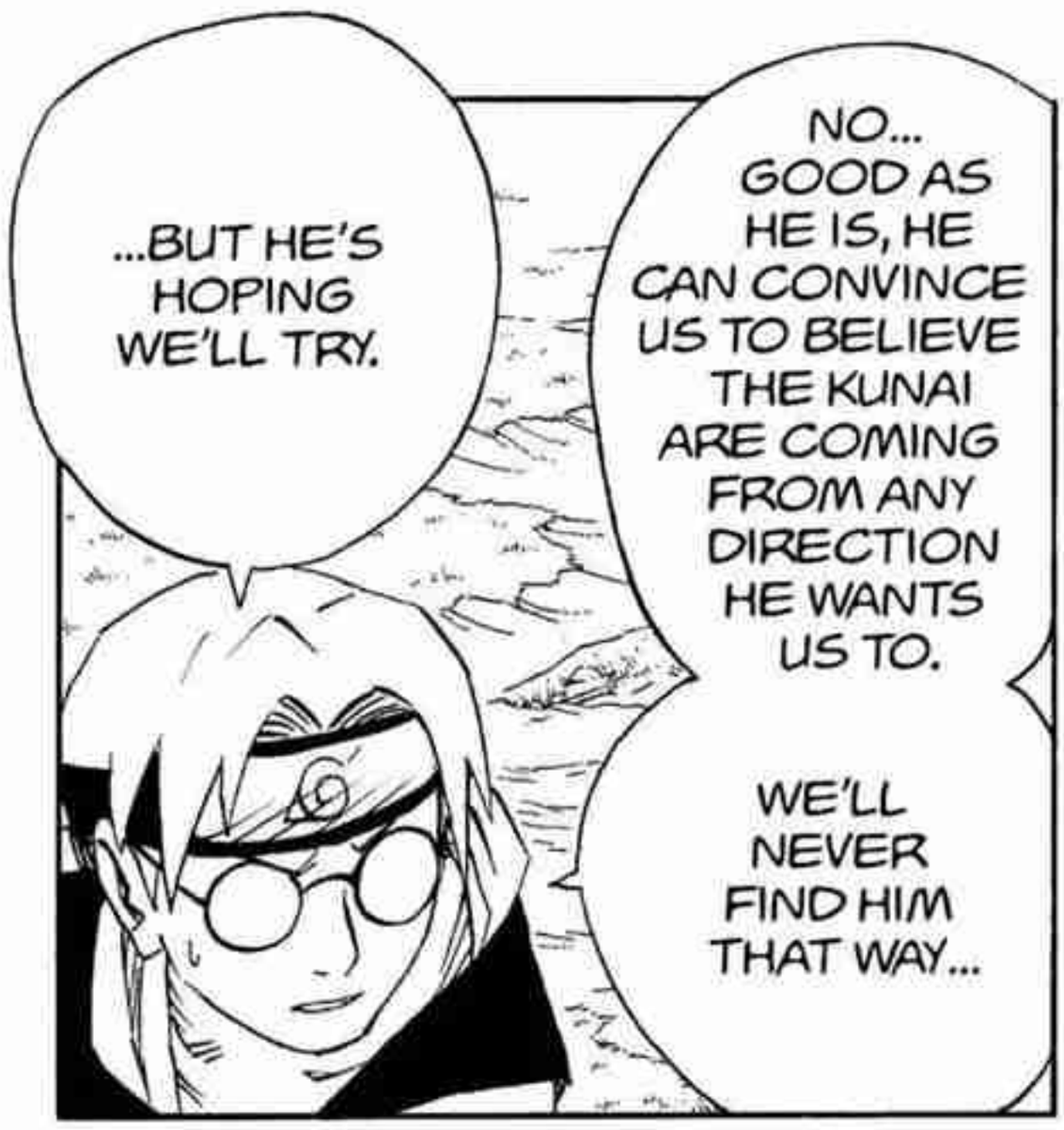
SKREEE
?!

BLAST IT!!
K

(PUF)
...GENJUTSU CAST BY THE ENEMY!
(HUF)
(HUF)
THEY ARE JUST ILLUSIONS...

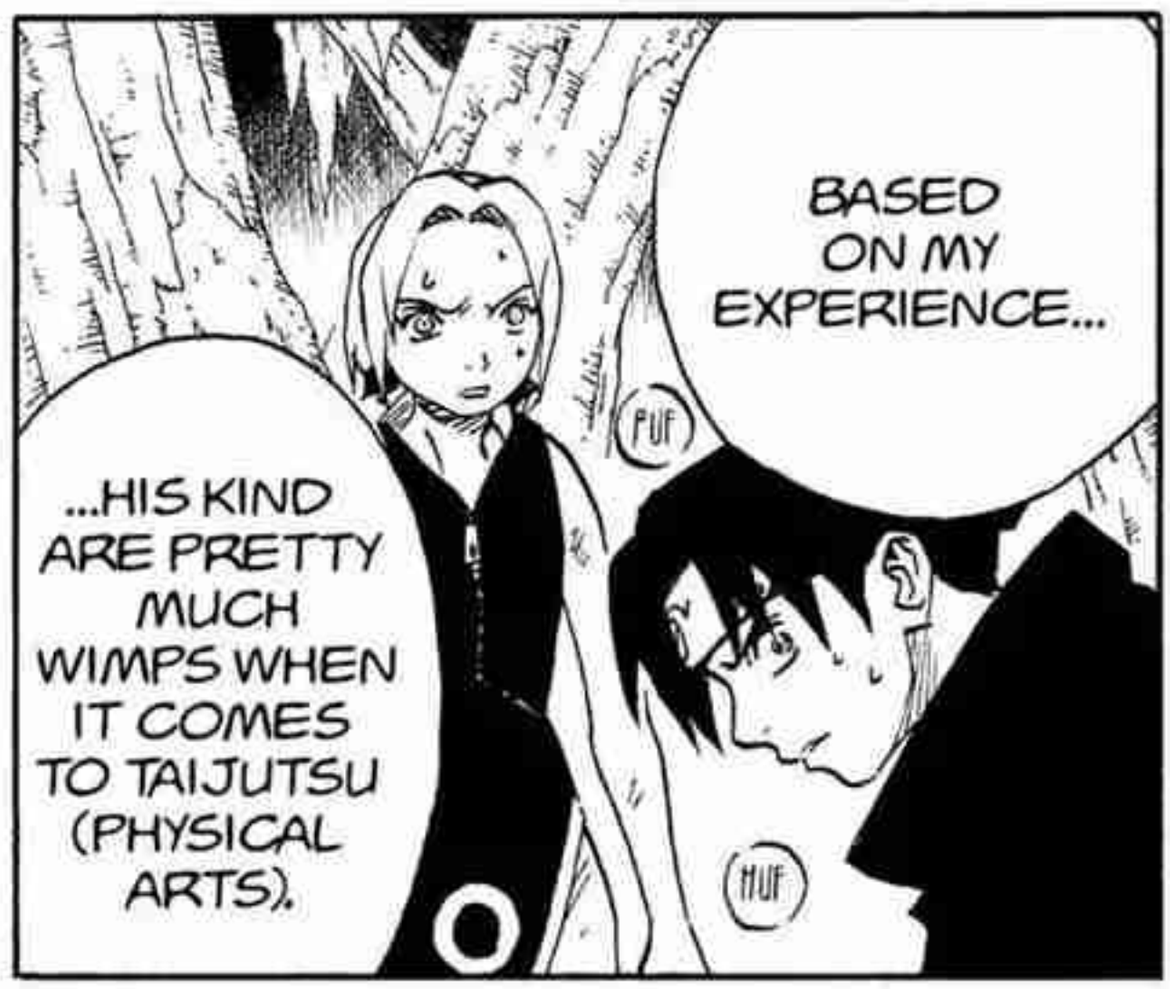

THE ILLUSIONIST IS WATCHING FROM SOMEWHERE CLOSE BY, SYNCHRONIZING A REAL, PHYSICAL ATTACK WITH THE MOVEMENTS OF THE ENEMIES WE THINK WE'RE SEEING!
IT ENHANCES OUR PERCEPTION THAT THE SHADOW SHINOBI WE'RE FIGHTING ARE REAL.
NO...
SASUKE'S RIGHT.

KABUTO'S WOUND IS REAL...!
B-BUT...


...BUT HE'S HOPING WE'LL TRY.
NO... GOOD AS HE IS, HE CAN CONVINCE US TO BELIEVE THE KUNAI ARE COMING FROM ANY DIRECTION HE WANTS US TO.
WE'LL NEVER FIND HIM THAT WAY...

...AND KICK HIS BUTT!!
SO I'LL HUNT DOWN THE COWARD WHO'S THROWING KUNAI KNIVES FROM BEHIND THE SCENES...

...WON'T COME OUT AND FACE US UNTIL WE'RE COMPLETELY WORN OUT AND HELPLESS.
THE ACTUAL, PHYSICAL FOE...
...
MUF
MUF
PUF


BASED ON MY EXPERIENCE...
...HIS KIND ARE PRETTY MUCH WIMPS WHEN IT COMES TO TAIJUTSU (PHYSICAL ARTS).
PUF
MUF

...IF THAT'S HOW THEY WANT TO PLAY IT.
OKAY...
SLU
UP

...IS TO KEEP MOVING AND AVOID THEIR ATTACKS.
RIGHT NOW, OUR ONLY CHOICE...

THE NIGHT IS YOUNG...! HEH HEH HEH...

I WONDER HOW LONG THEY'LL LAST...

FWU
HUF
HUF
PUF
HOW LONG CAN WE?!

OHHH! HOW LONG CAN THEY KEEP THIS UP?!

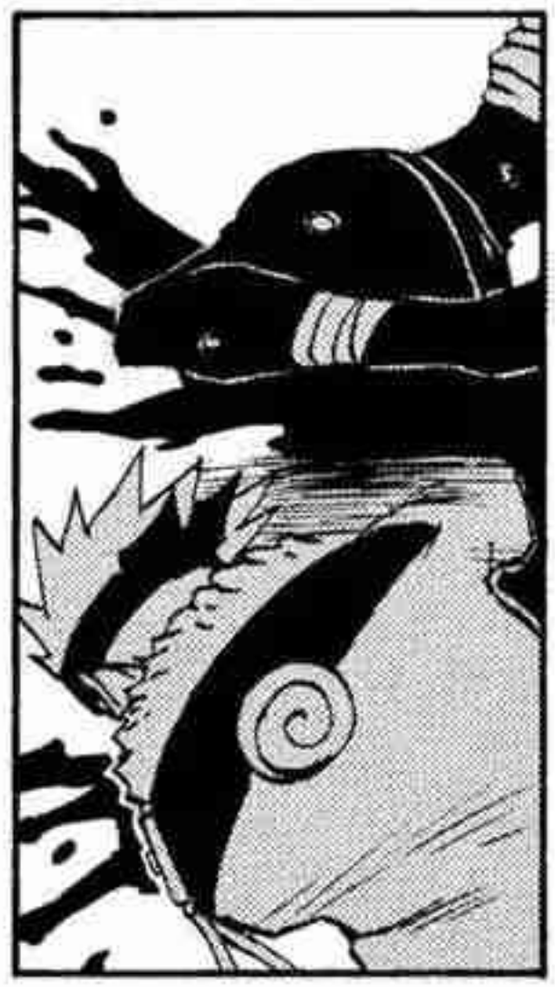
HE
H

GRRRRR
NARUTO, NO!! DON'T SQUANDER YOUR CHAKRA!!
A DIRECT ATTACK CAN'T HELP US!

...WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO JUST HURL KNIVES AT US WITHOUT US SEEING WHERE THEY'RE HIDING!
IF WE WERE TO DISSIPATE ALL OF THE ILLUSIONS SIMULTANEOUSLY, WHOEVER'S CASTING THEM...

WWWWG

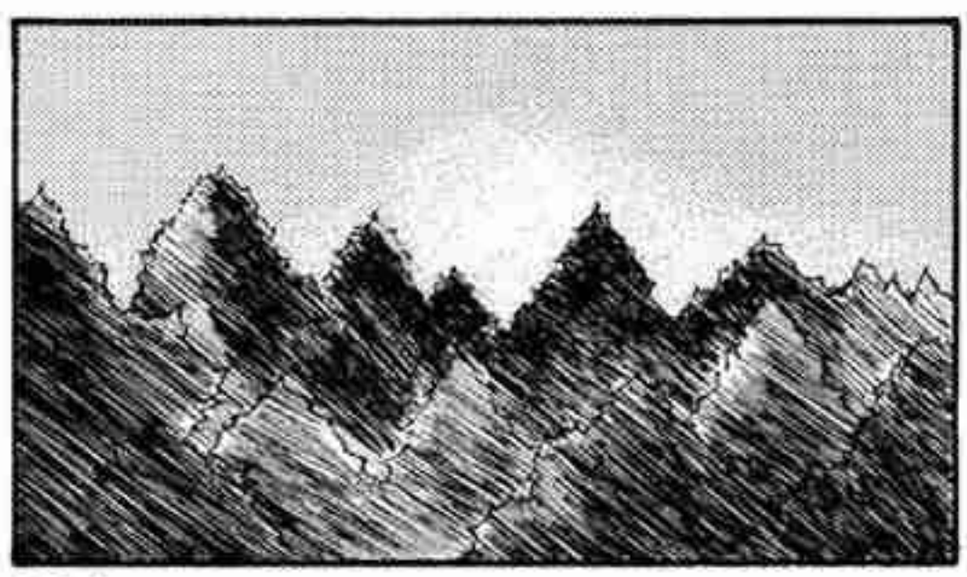
KAGEBUNSHIN NO JUTSU! ART OF THE SHADOW DOPPELGANGER!!



HEH HEH HEH...
IT WOULD SEEM OUR BEST COURSE IS TO INCREASE OUR NUMBERS.

!!

RATS!!
...!!



SSSSHHH
HUF
HUF
PUF
HUF
PUF

SLITHER

POP POP POP POP POP POP

!!
HUF
HUF
PUF
PUF

TONNNNG

I'M SO GLAD THERE'S TIME FOR A LITTLE TASTE OF PAYBACK!
...MAKING US WORK HARD ALL NIGHT.
SKF

...YOU'RE THE ONE WHO MAIMED MY SHOULDER! AND HERE YOU ARE AGAIN...
I KNOW YOU...
TAK

HUF

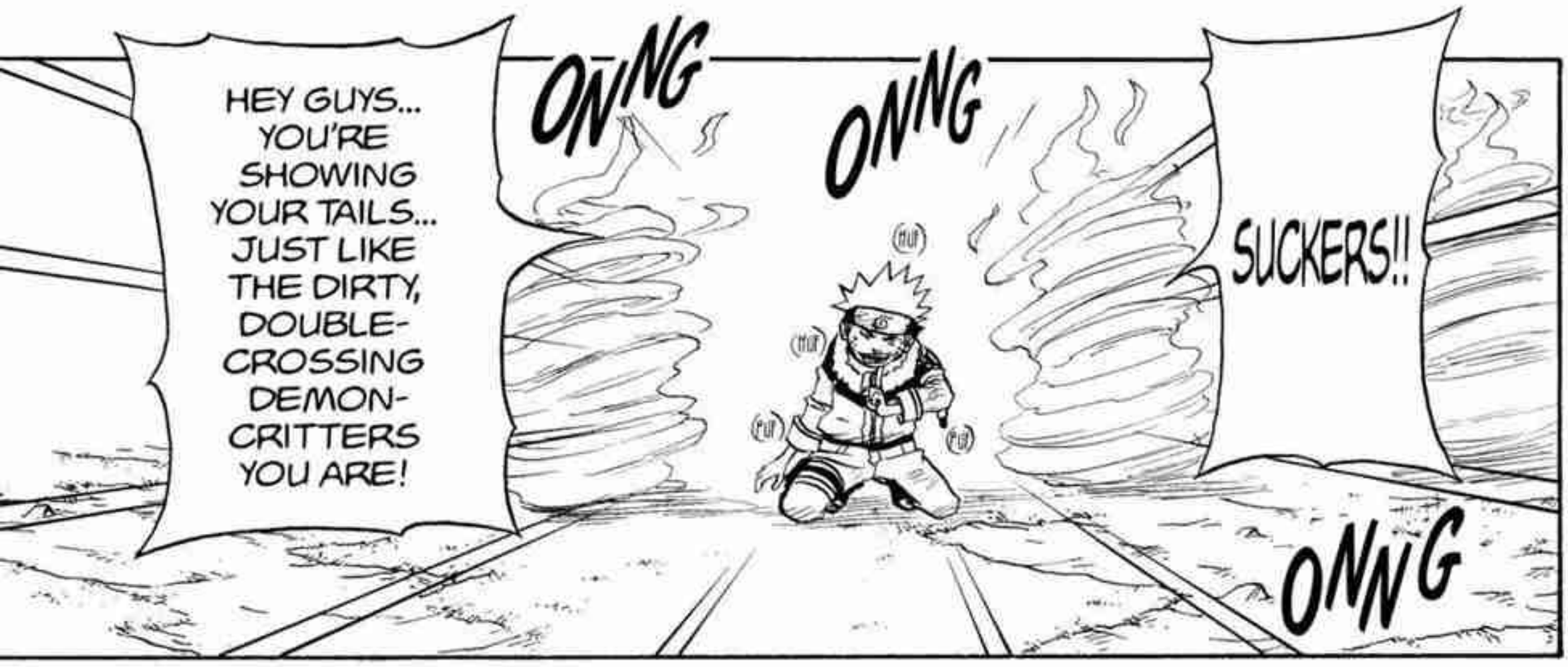
PUF
PUF
HUF

HUF

NICE WORK, NARUTO!

NOW WHO'S THE TRAPPED RAT?

?!


HEY GUYS... YOU'RE SHOWING YOUR TAILS... JUST LIKE THE DIRTY, DOUBLE-CROSSING DEMON-CRITTERS YOU ARE!
ONNG
ONNG
SUCKERS!!
ONNG

HAH!

PRETTY SLICK, EH? YOU WERE THINKING THE SHADOW DOPPELGANGERS WERE MY WHOLE ACT...BUT THEY WERE JUST A DISTRACTION...

...TO KEEP YOU FROM NOTICING I WAS SINGLE-HANDEDLY IMPERSONATING MY ENTIRE TEAM!!

ONNG

SKF

ONNG

NO... NO WAY! THAT LITTLE PUNK COULDN'T HAVE--!

!!

PUF

...!!

HUF

HUF

FLOP

...USING GENJUTSU TO BEAT YOU AT YOUR OWN GAME!

AND WHILE HE DID THAT, WE THREE SNEAKED UP BEHIND YOU...

!

EEP!

I'LL HANDLE THE REST.
YOU EXPENDED ALL YOUR CHAKRA, NARUTO.

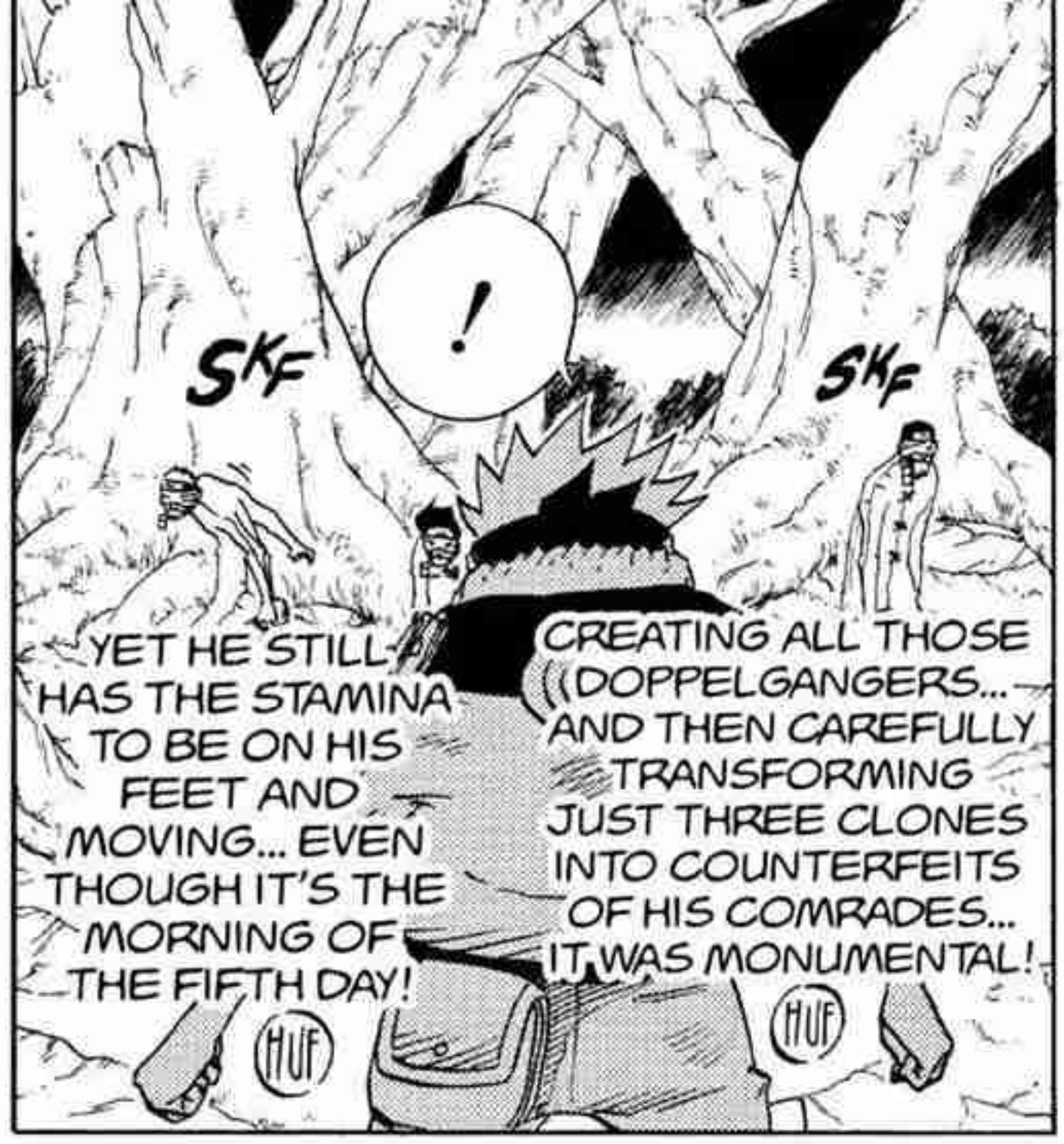
AAUGH!!
SSSM

POW
!!

GRR
HUF
PUF
HUF
NO WAY! I WON'T STAND AROUND AND LET YOU HAVE ALL THE FUN!
RRR

...
!

Number 63: One More Face


!
SKF
SKF
YET HE STILL HAS THE STAMINA TO BE ON HIS FEET AND MOVING... EVEN THOUGH IT'S THE MORNING OF THE FIFTH DAY!
CREATING ALL THOSE DOPPELGANGERS... AND THEN CAREFULLY TRANSFORMING JUST THREE CLONES INTO COUNTERFEITS OF HIS COMRADES... IT WAS MONUMENTAL!
HUF
HUF

HIS CHAKRA IS IMMENSE!

...NARUTO...

...HE COULD BECOME A MONSTER!
HE'S STILL A BOY... IF HE REALLY GAINS MASTERY OVER THAT MASSIVE CHAKRA...

SO WE'RE GOING TO DEMONSTRATE OUR OWN NINJA SKILLS!!
ONNG

BUT WE'RE ALMOST OUT OF TIME!

HOWEVER, THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE'RE COMPLETELY OUT OF LUCK!
YOU DO HAVE SOME SKILL...
SHHF
SHHF
SHHF

ART OF THE DOPPELGANGER -- MIST TECHNIQUE!

POP !!!

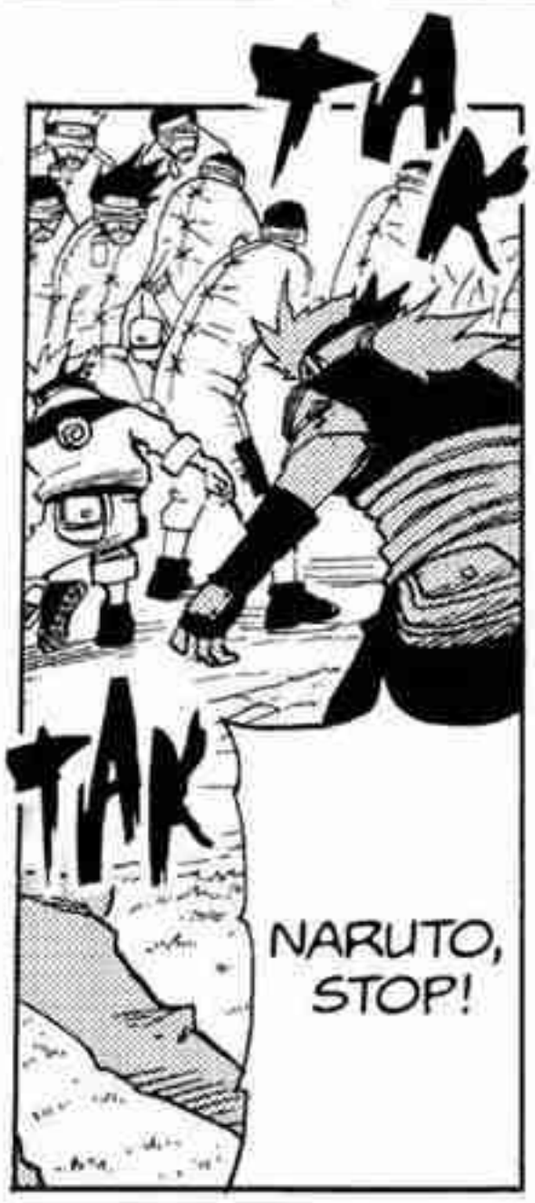
ZOOM

CHAAARGE!!

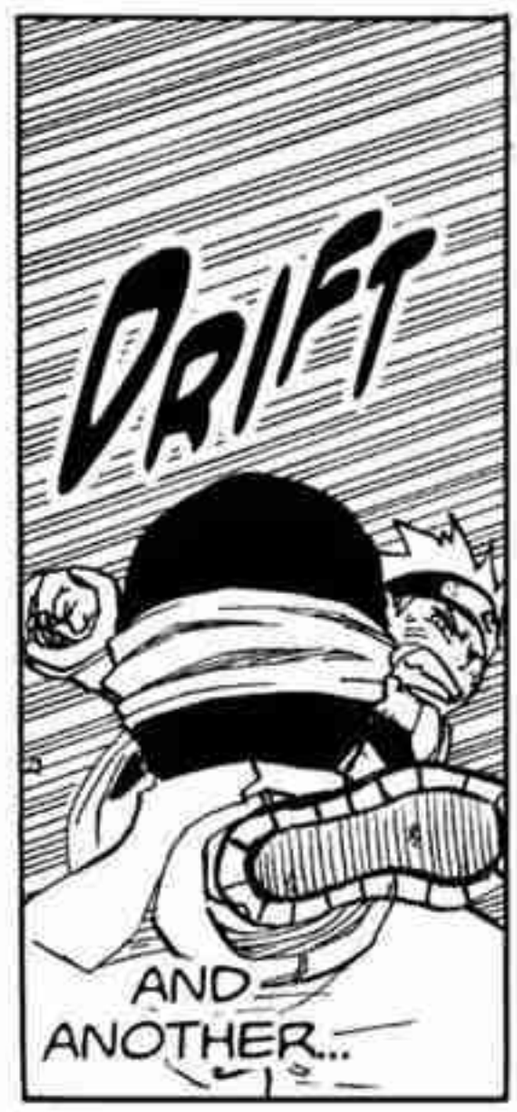
RATS!! ANOTHER DOPPEL-GANGER!
DRIFFT

!!
DRRRIFT

IS THIS ANOTHER ILLUSION?!
THEY'RE ALL FAKE!


TAK
TAK
NARUTO, STOP!

DRIFFT
AND HIM!


DRIFT
AND ANOTHER...

SHARIN-GAN!!!

PUF
HUF
THIS IS THE LAST OF MY CHAKRA...

VILLIN

ONING

!

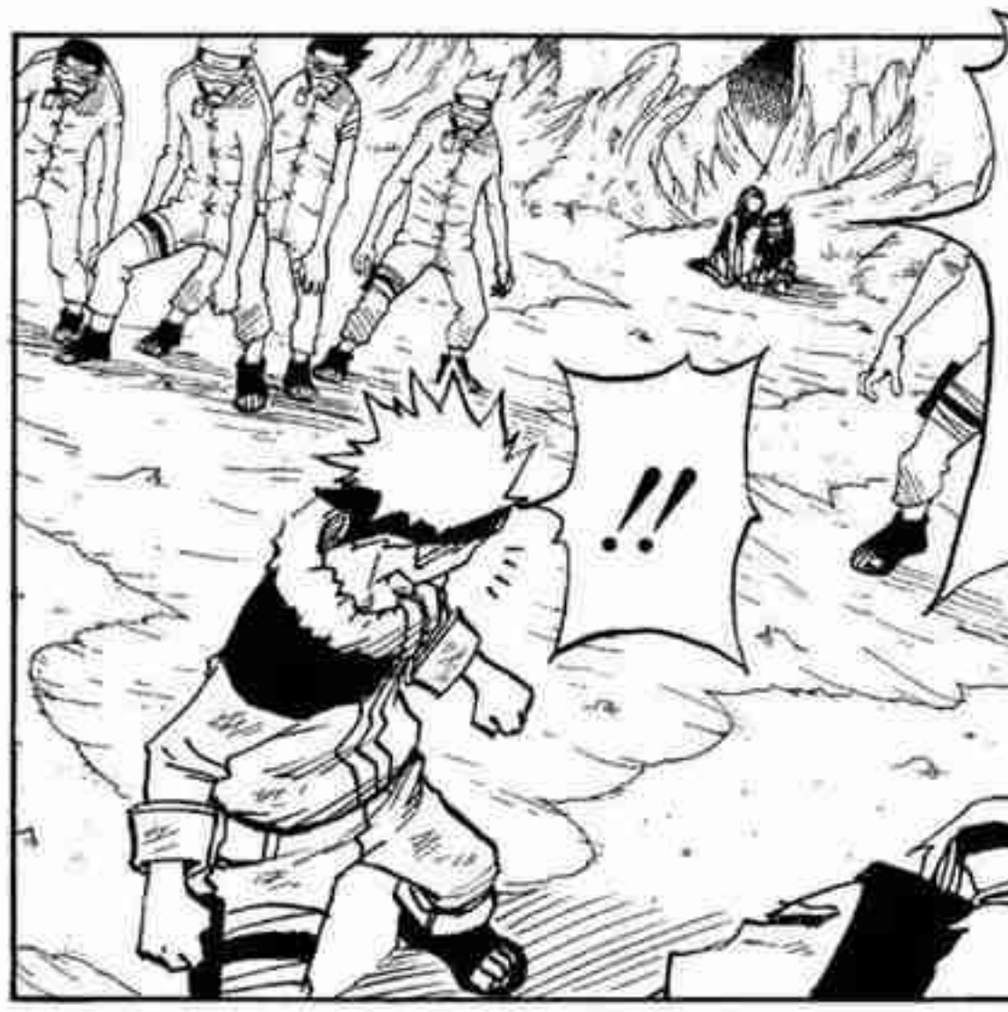
SASUKE?!
AUGHH!!
THROB
FLOP

!
HUF
SASUKE, DON'T USE THE SHARINGAN AGAIN!!
THAT MARK... IT'S SPREADING... LIKE BEFORE!
SHAME ON YOU, LETTING YOUR GUARD DOWN LIKE THAT.
SUHH
M
K!!
IIN

UHHN...

HOP
KABUTO...!

THOK


!!

DON'T BOTHER, NARUTO!
ALL RIGHT, YOU--!!

SO WHERE ARE THE REAL ATTACKS COMING FROM?!
BUT ILLUSIONS CAN'T PUNCH AND STAB, YOU KNOW!

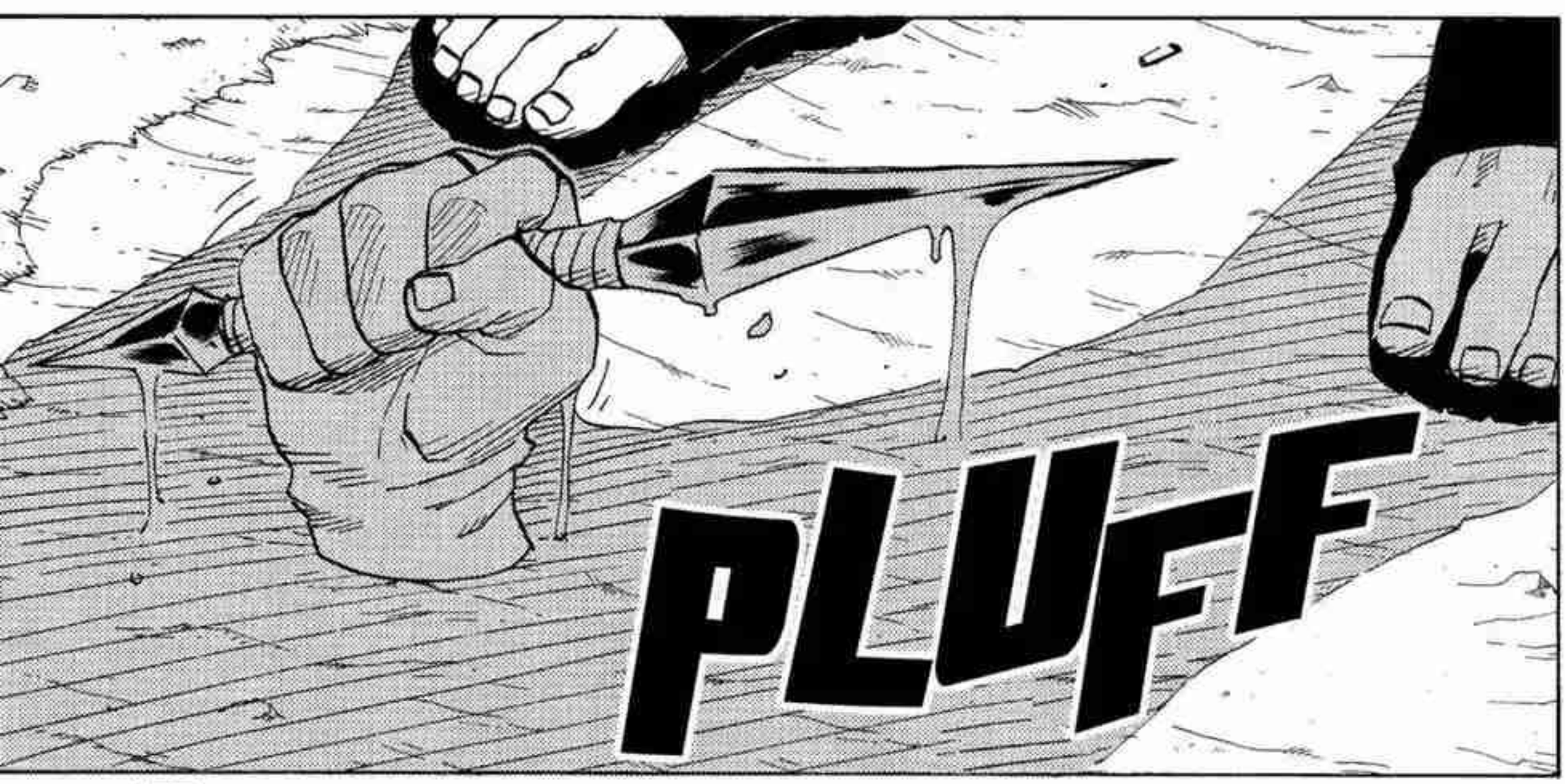
IT'S A WASTE OF TIME. THERE ARE NO REAL BODIES AMONG THEM FOR YOU TO HIT.
HUF
PUF

THAT'S ALL THE SHADOW DOPPELGANGERS I'VE GOT IN ME FOR A WHILE... NONE LEFT...
THUD
OWW!

THE MYSTERY IS THE ESSENCE OF THEIR ATTACK!!!
IF I KNEW THAT, WE WOULDN'T HAVE TO GO THROUGH ANY OF THIS!!

!!

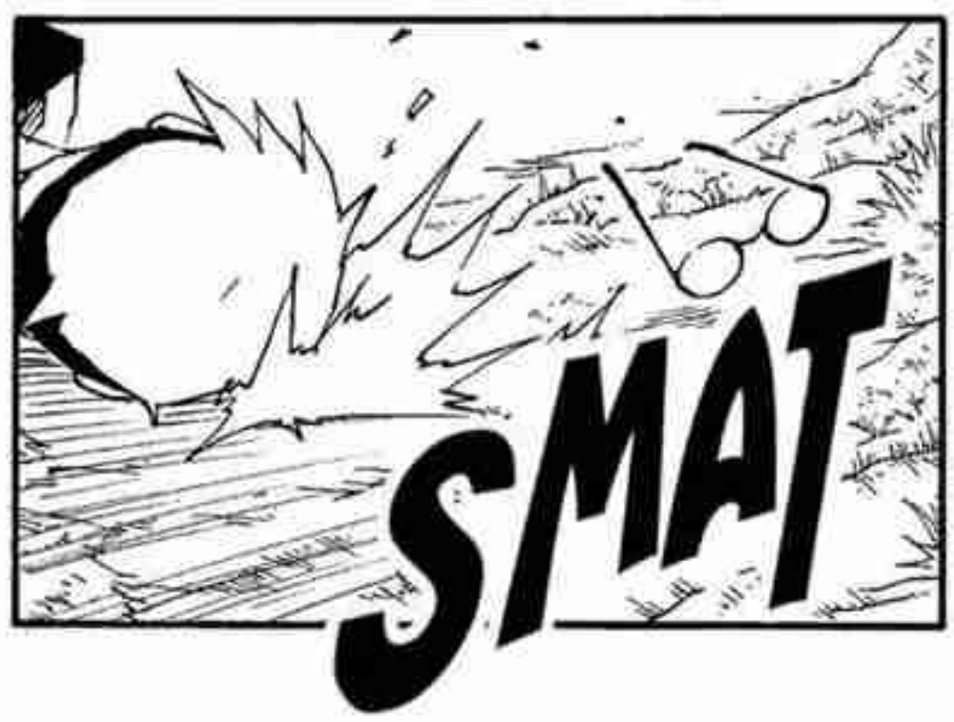
THEY SEEM TO HAVE REACHED THEIR LIMITS... HOW FORTUNATE!

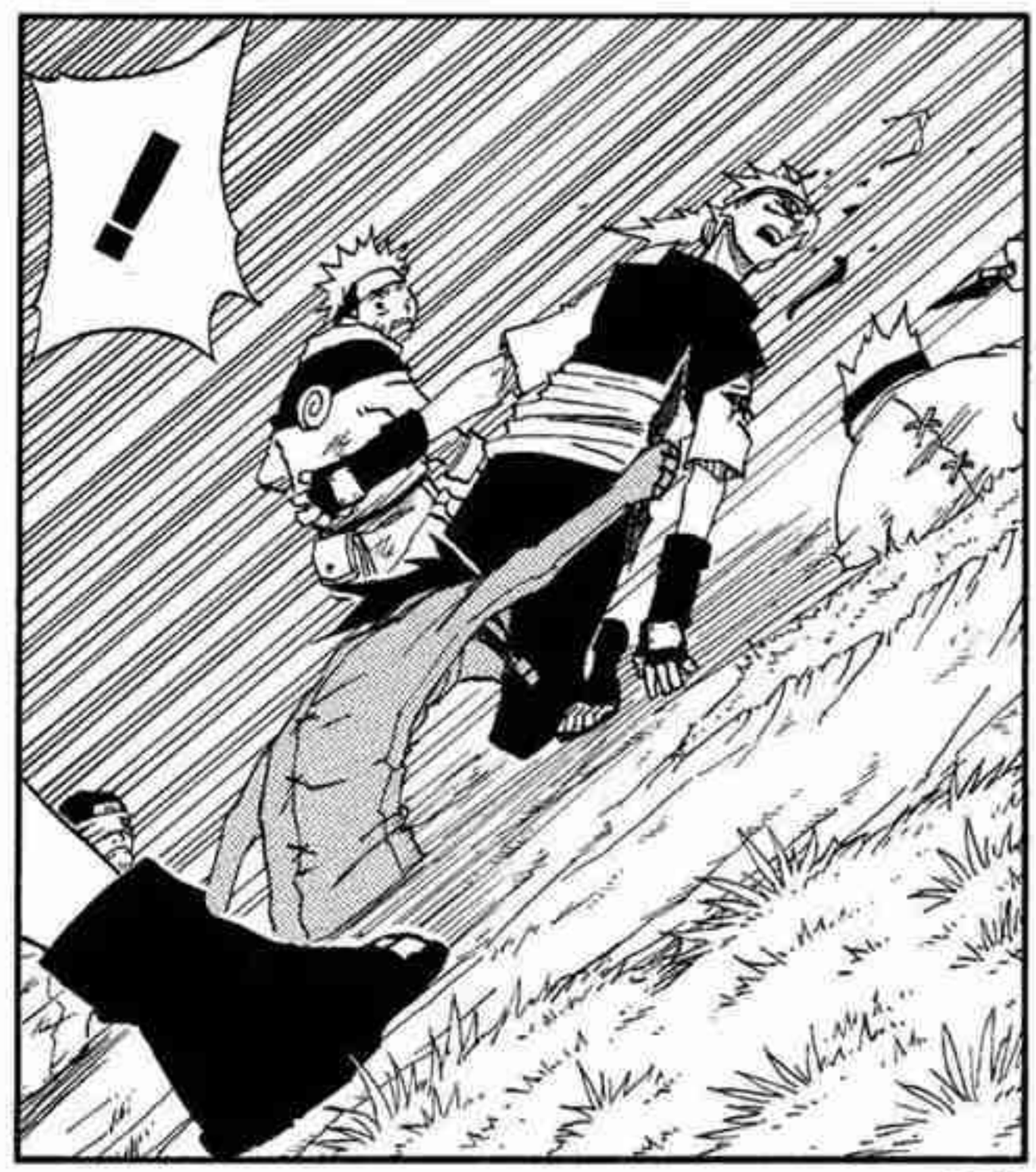

PLUFF

THO
HP

!

THAT'S IT!! THEY HID THEIR PHYSICAL SELVES USING DOTON -- THE ART OF EARTH -- AND USED DOPPELGANGERS TO MASK THE REAL ATTACKS!!
!!


SMAT


!

HEH...

GRRRR

DINK
DINK
DINK

SHUUUM

HUH?

BAM
YAAAAAKI!

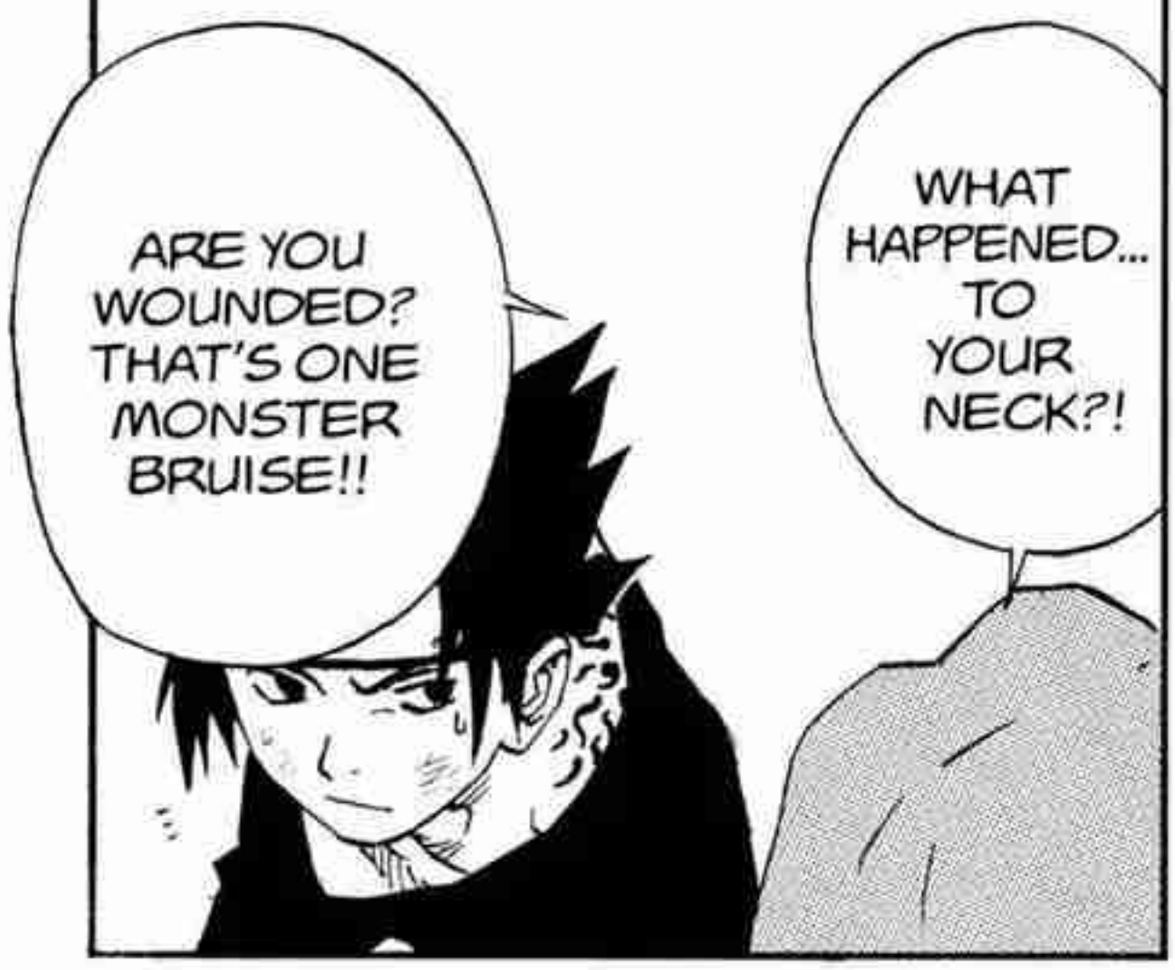
SKREEE

KOF
HUF
"SHAME ON YOU, LETTING YOUR GUARD DOWN LIKE THAT"... SUCKER!
HAH!
HUF

HEH HEH...
NARUTO, THAT WAS OUTSTANDING!!
PLOP

...

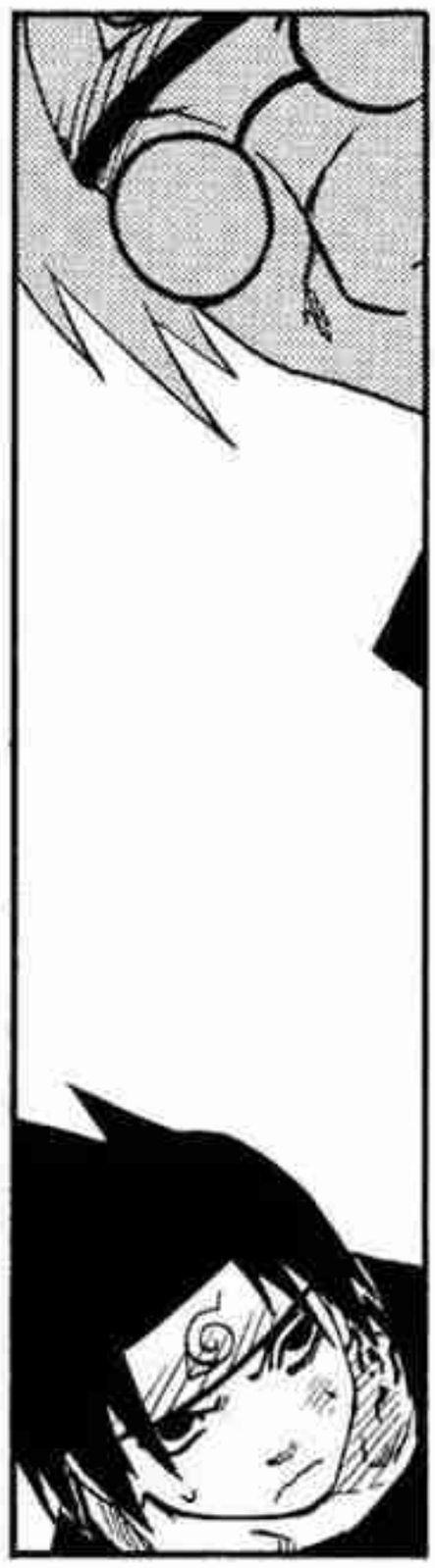
THANKS FOR THE SAVE, NARUTO!
PHEW!


ARE YOU WOUNDED? THAT'S ONE MONSTER BRUISE!!
WHAT HAPPENED... TO YOUR NECK?!

!

...IT'S NOTHING...
PAT

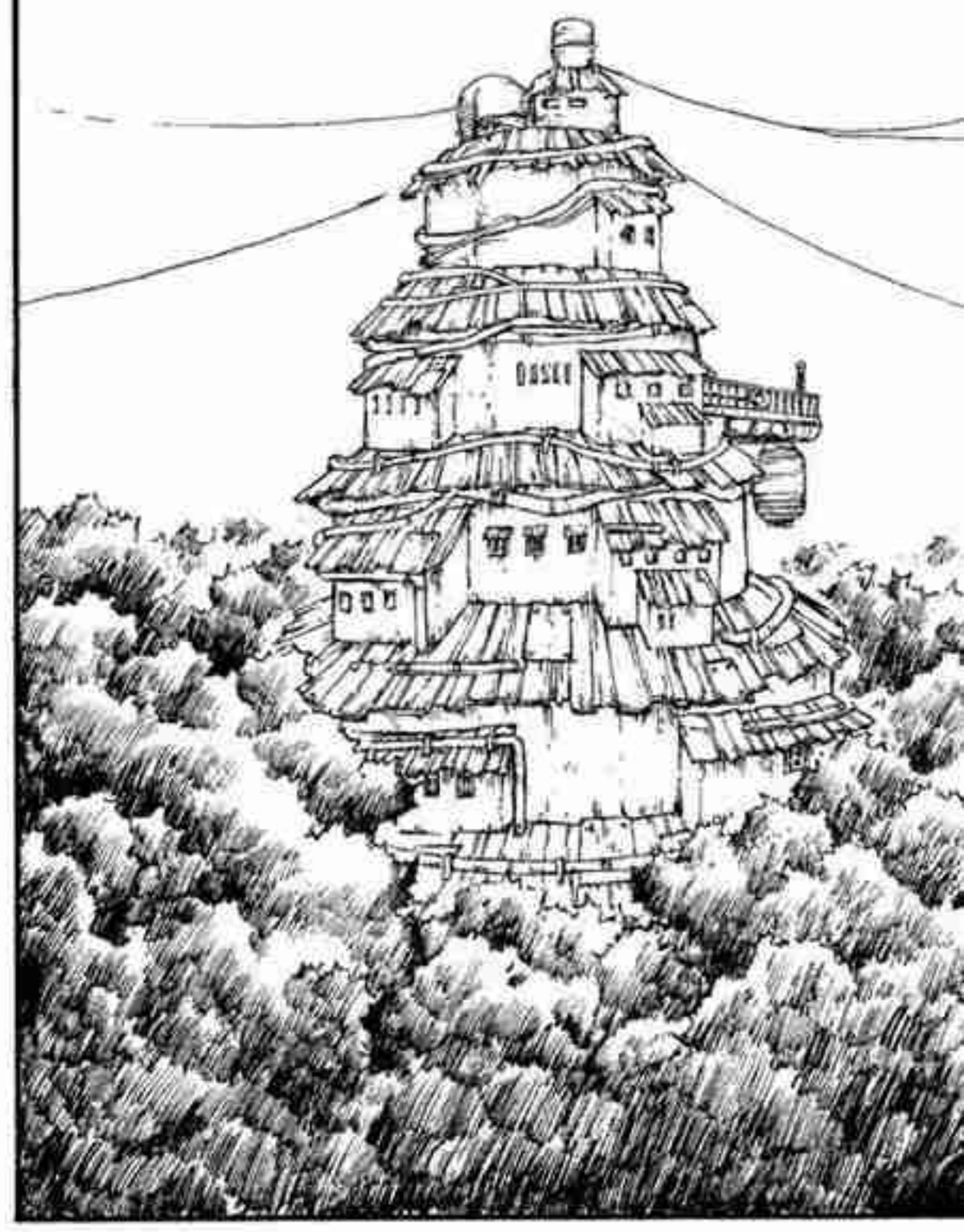
SOMETHING ABOUT THIS KABUTO JUST... BUGS ME!



GOOD WORK!

WE GOT US A HEAVEN SCROLL!!
HEY! OVER HERE!

SHHF



YOU'RE LATE, KABUTO!
HUH? ...OH, IT'S YOU GUYS...

THE WAY YOU CAME THROUGH IN THE END WAS AMAZING, NARUTO.
DON'T THANK ME. YOU EARNED THEM.
BUT IT'S ALL GOOD! THANKS TO YOU, OUR GROUP HAS A FULL SET OF SCROLLS, SAME AS YOU DO!

!
SORRY. I RAN INTO A LITTLE TROUBLE.

YEAH!
GOOD LUCK, EVERYONE. GIVE IT YOUR BEST!
THIS IS THE DOOR WE ENTER THROUGH.

...

HEH...

THE SEAL ON THE DOOR SAYS "OPEN."

TAK

HE'S ALREADY EXCEEDED ALL PROJECTIONS, SIR...

WHAT WAS THE OUT-COME...?

KREEAK

KLIK

THE CHARACTER ON THE CARD SAYS "SHINOBI."

HEH HEH... IT ALMOST SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE A LITTLE BIT WORRIED...

FLIP

AND... HOW WAS HE?

I FIGURE YOU'LL NEED THIS.

I'VE KEPT A CAREFUL RECORD OF HIS PROGRESS THROUGHOUT THE SECOND EXAM.

...LORD OROCHIMARU.
NO... I'M JUST CURIOUS TO HEAR YOUR OPINION...

THAT'S NOT REALLY NECESSARY, IS IT...?

...AS ONE OF MY SOUND NINJA SPIES.

...BECAUSE, JUST LIKE ALWAYS, THE DECISION IS YOURS ALONE.
SNUFF

POKE

HEH... I DO SO ENJOY YOUR INTELLIGENCE.
DRIFT

GOOD WORK...

...THERE'S NO ONE HERE...

If qualities of Heaven
are your desire,
Acquire wisdom and
knowledge to take your mind higher.
If Earthly qualities are what you lack,
Train your body in the fields and prepare
to attack.
When both Heaven and Earth
are opened together,
The path of peril will
revert to the righteous path forever.
This " " is the secret way...
...that guides us on from this
place today.

The Third Hokage

TO BE CONTINUED IN NARUTO VOL. 8!